DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 741.672/7 FOR #909

FROM Turkey (Grew) DATED Jan. 2, 1930.

TO

NAME

1—1127 a.r.o

INDEX BUREAU
767.68119/847

REGARDING: Transmitting list of British colonies and other possessions which did not adhere to the Commercial Convention of Lausanne.

kn

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

867.6111/848

SEE 468.11 Leon, James/12 FOR #1347

FROM Greece (Skinner) DATED May 8,1930.

TO NAME

1—1127 GPO

REGARDING: Real property situated in Turkey and belonging to persons of Hellenic origin possessing another nationality than Hellenic or Turkish, should be restored to its proprietors who retain all the rights guaranteed by Articles 65 and 66 of the Treaty of Peace of Lausanne, and by Declaration IX annexed to that Treaty.

Athens, May 8, 1930.

No. 1347.

Subject: Claims of American Citizens of Greek Orthodox Origin.

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to refer again to the Department's instruction No. 345 (without date, File No. 468.11 Leon/James/3) in which the claim of Mr. James Leon is discussed, and in which, more particularly, the Department directs me to ascertain whether it is possible to agree upon some procedure, whereby funds derived from the sale of property held by American citizens of Greek origin under the exchange of populations agreement between Turkey and Greece, can be obtained by them without the necessity of their acquiring Greek nationality. The Department mentions its fear that there may be a number of cases similar to the one of Mr. James Leon, and desires therefore to provide some method by which such citizens may obtain the funds rightfully belonging to them without putting their American citizenship in jeopardy.

The particular circumstances applying in the case of Mr. James Leon are dealt with in other correspondence. With respect

to the

to the general question, I took it up at once with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and he has now submitted the views of his Department in the form of a note dated April 29, 1930, a translation of which is enclosed herewith.

It will be observed from the note that, as to real property situated in Turkey and belonging to persons of Hellenic origin possessing another nationality than Hellenic or Turkish, it should be restored to its proprietors who retain all the rights guaranteed by Articles 65 and 66 of the Treaty of Peace of Lausanne, and by Declaration IX annexed to that Treaty. Consequently the Hellenic Government looks upon itself as completely exculpated from any responsibility respecting claims of this kind, which should be brought to the attention of the Turkish Government, if "as seems probable," that Government should have taken possession of these properties "for its own use and sole profit."

The foregoing point of view seems to be reasonable, but it also opens up the old question of the status of naturalized American citizens of Turkish (Orthodox) origin. As presumably the Turkish Government has never consented to the naturalization of its citizens in the United States, it would continue to look upon American claimants such as are now under consideration, as still Turkish, and therefore disqualified from seeking the support of the American Government.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed) Robert P. Skinner

Enclosure as stated

Copy to E.I.C.

RPS/ewf

Enclosure No. 1 with Despatch No. 1347 from the American Legation at Athens.

(Translation)

"Ministry for Foreign Affairs
"No. 2050

"VERBAL NOTE

"With reference to the memorandum left by His Excellency, Mr. Skinner, on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Michalakopoulos, on February 14, 1930, concerning the claims of certain American citizens of Hellenic origin relative to their properties situated in Turkey, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has the honor to communicate to the Legation of the United States of America the following in reply.

The Hellenic Government has assumed the obligation of indemnifying only those non-exchangeable Hellenic proprietors whose properties situated in Turkey, are to be acquired by the Turkish Government in compensation for property situated in Greece and belonging to non-exchangeable Turks, which is to be acquired by the Hellenic government.

On the contrary, the Hellenic Government has never agreed to idemnify those Hellenic non-exchangeable proprietors whose property is to remain outside of the application of the measure for compensation quoted, and it (the Hellenic Government) would be unable to do so for the simple reason that these properties will be restored to them by the Turkish Government.

Thus,

Thus, before undertaking to set up an arrangement for the indemnification of those persons described in the Aide Memoire from the American Legation, it would be necessary to ascertain if the property of those persons will be acquired by the Turkish Government in applying the system of compensation, or whether they will be restored to their owners under dispositions now operative, because in the opinion even of the American Government it is evident that in the second case there could be no question of indemnifying owners who are entitled to recover possession of their property.

Thus - it results from Article 15 of the agreement signed at Athens, December 1, 1926, between Greece and Turkey, that real property situated in Turkey and belonging to persons of Hellenic origin possessing another nationality other than Hellenic or Turkish, will not be taken over in the application of the rule of compensation by the Turkish Government, and this latter is obliged to restore such property to its proprietors, who retain all the rights guaranteed by Articles 65 and 66 of the Treaty of Peace of Lausanne, and by Declaration IX annexed to that Treaty, wherever they possessed the quality of a Turkish or Hellenic subject at the moment when the said treaty of peace became operative.

Therefore, having regard to the fact that the Hellenic Government is a complete stranger as to the fate of properties for which indemnification is sought by American citizens of Hellenic origin, and as the Hellenic Government in no case can be held responsible for the non-execution of obligations which fall upon the Turkish Government, it follows that it is to the

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 711.672-Straits/7 FOR Memo

FROM Near Eastern Division (Patterson) DATED Nov.19.1930
TO NAME 1—1172

REGARDING: Memorandum indicative of the trend of American Official thought in respect of means of obtaining "Freedom of the Straits" at the Lausanne Conference.

kn

767.68119/848 1/2

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 890g.6363 T 84/475 FOR memorandum

FROM Near Eastern Division (Murray) DATED Mar.10, 1931

TO NAME

1—1172 ero

REGARDING: Suggests possible change in the Department's attitude regarding the Allied Straits Convention of 1923, in view of recent naval developments and agreements.

767.68119/849

W1

PREPARING OFFICE
WILL INDICATE WHETHER
Collect
Charge Department
OR
Charge to
$

TELEGRAM SENT

RECEIVED

Department of State

1933 DEC - 16 PM 6 17

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS

TO BE TRANSMITTED
CONFIDENTIAL CODE
NONCONFIDENTIAL CODE
PLAIN

Washington,

December 15, 1931

AMEMBASSY

ISTANBUL (TURKEY)

60 Is the Department correct in assuming that in accordance with the provisions of Article twenty the Allied Establishment Convention of July 24, 1923, required one year's notice of denunciation prior to termination? If so, has the convention actually been denounced and on what date and by whom was notice of termination given? If the convention has not been denounced, is the Department correct in assuming that it is still in full force?

Please reply by telegraph.

S Stimson

NE PHA/LVD

TD

CR

Dec. 15 1931

767.68119/850A

*Enciphered by*_____

*Sent by operator*_____ *M.*, _____, *19*____, _____

Index Bu.—No. 50.

GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 1—138

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
RECEIVED
DEC 7 1931
DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

DEC 16 1931

December 14, 1931.

WSM:

Miss Neale's section now tells me that a search has been made in the League of Nations section of DCR regarding the denunciation of the Allied-Turkish Establishment Convention of July 24, 1923. It appears that the convention was registered with the League of Nations but that there is no record that the League has ever received notice of denunciation. This may or may not be conclusive proof that no notice of denunciation has been given, but Dr. McClure tells me that he has noticed that in the case of multilateral treaties which have been denounced, a notice frequently appears in the League Treaty series. Miss Holland has already looked in Allen's press reports and has found no reference to denunciation. Under the circumstances I think that we have about exhausted our sources of reference and unless we learn something tomorrow from the further search that is being made I think that we might send a telegram to Istanbul along the lines of the attached draft.

MSM

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

December 12, 1931

Convention respecting conditions of residence and business and jurisdiction between Turkey and the Allies, July 24, 1923.

Chapter III. Article 20.

The present Convention is concluded for a period of seven years from its coming into force.

If the Convention is not denounced by one of the High Contracting Parties at least one year before the expiry of the said period, it will remain in force until denounced. Such denunciation will take effect a year after notice of it is given.

In the event of the Convention being denounced by any one of the Contracting Powers other than Turkey, the denunciation will only take effect as between such Power and Turkey.

Turkey will be entitled to denounce the Convention either as regards all the other Contracting Powers, or as regards only one of them; in the latter event, the Convention will remain in force as regards the rest.

Ratifications were deposited on or before August 6, 1924 by Greece, Turkey, British Empire, Italy, Japan and Rumania, and by France on August 30, 1924.

Letter to Dr. Brown
12/22/31
P/RA-SC.

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DEC 21 1931
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

WP

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
RECEIVED
DEC 21 1931
DIVISION OF

FROM GRAY

Istanbul

Dated December 20, 1931

Rec'd 10:15 p. m.

TREATY DIVISION
DEC 23 1931
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DEC 21 1931

Secretary of State,

Washington

60, December 20, 11 a. m.

Department's 60, December 16, 6 p. m. Foreign Office states according to article 20 one year's notice of denunciation prior to termination was required. Convention denounced August 13, 1930 by all ratifying Powers excepting Japan which did so August 18, 1930 and therefore Convention terminated in August 1931.

GREW

CIB

767.68119/851

FILED
DEC 28 1931

December 21, 1931.

My dear Dr. Brown:

With further reference to my letter of December 18, 1931, I am now in receipt of a telegram from Istanbul to the effect that the Allied Establishment Convention was denounced by all of the ratifying Powers except Japan on August 13, 1930. The telegram adds that on August 18, 1930, Japan also denounced the Convention, which therefore terminated in accordance with its terms in August, 1931.

As of possible interest I enclose a copy of Ismet Pasha's letter of August 4, 1923, addressed to Mr. Grew, by which the Turkish Government agreed to accord to American institutions in Turkey treatment similar to that which had been accorded to British, French and Italian institutions on July 24, 1923. A copy of Ismet's letter of the last mentioned date to the representatives of the three Powers is also enclosed.

You will observe that the latter communication appears to leave vague the period during which the Turks agree to recognize

Dr. Philip Marshall Brown,
87 Library Place,
Princeton, New Jersey.

Note 367.116

767.68119/851

recognize the existence of the British, French and Italian institutions. I assume, however, that there is little doubt that the assurances contained in this letter expired at the same time as the Establishment Convention. This viewpoint is strengthened by the fact that the letter addressed to Mr. Grew provides specifically that the assurances regarding American institutions hold good only so long as the Establishment Convention remained in force.

Sincerely yours,

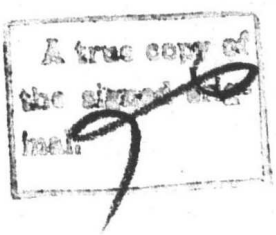
Wallace Murray

Enclosures.
As stated.

PHA/GC

DEC 22 1931 P.M.

A true copy of the signed original



Note 367.1164

87 Library Place
Princeton New Jersey

Ans'd. 12/18/31 WSM-SC

16 December 1931

Letter drafted 12/21/31 PHA-SC.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
File
DEC 22 1931
DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

Dear Mr. Murray:

I am enclosing for your information certain memoranda received from Doctor Gates concerning affairs in Turkey. They may be of interest to you. Kindly return when you are through with them.

Enclosures returned Dec 18/31

It is quite evident that only a firm stand on our rights and a tactful defence of our standards of education and ideals can hold the Turks back from an extreme Chauvinism which they might themselves regret.

I greatly enjoyed the chance to talk over this situation and shall hope to see you again early in January.

Faithfully yours,

Philip M. Brown

Mr. Wallace Smith Murray
Department of State
Washington, D. C.

767.68119/852

FILED
DEC 30 1931

December 18, 1931.

My dear Dr. Brown:

I wish to thank you for your letter of December 16, 1931, enclosing certain memoranda received from Dr. Gates concerning affairs in Turkey.

I have read this material with much interest and I must say that it only serves to confirm the misgivings which I expressed to you in confidence the other day. I hope, however, that some satisfactory solution can be worked out and, as I told you, the Department will be only too happy to lend assistance whenever it is called upon to do so.

In connection with the expiration of the Allied Convention of Residence and Establishment signed at Lausanne on August 6, 1923, you have doubtless noted the reference thereto on page two of the attached mimeographed memorandum regarding the teaching of history, geography and civics in foreign schools. Since my conversation with you the other day I examined the Convention again

and

Dr. Philip Marshall Brown,

87 Library Place,

Princeton, New Jersey.

767.68119/852

and find that, in accordance with Article 20 of that instrument, in the absence of one year's notice of denunciation prior to the seven year period during which the Convention was to remain in force it was to remain operative after that period until it was actually denounced. A careful search of the Department's records has failed to reveal any indication of a formal denunciation of the Convention, although there are numerous references in Mr. Grew's despatches to the fact that the validity of this instrument was to terminate last August. In order that we might be informed of the exact situation we telegraphed Mr. Grew on December 13 inquiring as to the facts of the case. As soon as he has replied I shall be glad to let you know.

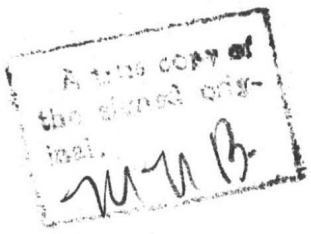
I enjoyed very much seeing you the other day and only wish that our meetings might be more frequent.

With best wishes, believe me

Sincerely yours,

Enclosures.
Memoranda

Wallace S. Murray,



NE WSM/GC

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Ankara, April 27, 1932.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
RECEIVED
MAY 5 1933
DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
MAY 5 1933
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

Dear Wallace:

I duly received your letter of February 25, in which you expressed some astonishment regarding the information which was furnished to the Department concerning the expiration of the Allied Establishment Convention. As soon as I looked into the matter I rather shared your astonishment. The information on which the Embassy based its telegram came from a prominent official of the Foreign Office. There was every reason to believe he was reliable. In this particular case, however, I fear that he indulged in some rather inaccurate statements. The real story regarding the Convention is as follows. Great Britain, Italy and Japan deposited ratifications on August 6, 1924, so that as stipulated in article 143 of the Peace Treaty this Treaty and the Conventions came into effect on that date for the three above-mentioned countries. France, on the other hand, did not deposit its ratification until August 30, 1924. In the case of Italy and Japan the Establishment Convention expired on August 6, 1931, and

767.68119/853
FILED
MAY 5 1933

Wallace S. Murray, Esquire,
Chief, Division of Near Eastern Affairs,
Department of State,
Washington.

for France on August 30, 1931. For Great Britain the Convention expired on September 3, 1930, with the exchange of ratifications of the British-Turkish Treaty of Commerce and Navigation. The Turks took the initiative in denouncing the Establishment Convention, notification of their intentions in this respect having been conveyed to the signatories on August 6, 1930.

I hope that the foregoing will clear up this somewhat tangled problem. I am only sorry that we passed on to you some information which was not accurate.

Yours sincerely,

J. Hoyland Shaw

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

D.C.R. to take note of last sentence. AE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
RECEIVED
MAY 5 1933
TO: DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS
Dr. (Mr. Ward)

TREATY DIVISION
MAY 5 - 1933
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

May 4, 1933.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
NEV file
MAY 1933
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

FW 767.68119/853

It will be recalled that the Embassy at Istanbul, in its telegram No. 60 (851) of December 20, 1931, reported that the Allied Establishment Convention with Turkey signed on July 24, 1923, had been denounced on August 13, 1930 by all the ratifying powers excepting Japan which did so on August 18, 1930, and that therefore the Convention terminated in August 1931.

At the time this information was received, the Division was somewhat surprised to learn that the Allies had been so accommodating as to act practically in unison in bringing to an end the establishment régime. Subsequently Mr. Murray, in a private letter to Mr. Shaw mentioned the fact that while one could have readily understood the Turks denouncing the Convention, it seemed difficult, on the other hand, to explain why the Powers should wish to do this.

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MAY 6 1933

Mr. Shaw replied in a personal letter of April 27, 1932 that the information contained in the Embassy's telegram was inaccurate and that the Turks had taken the initiative

in

in denouncing the Establishment Convention, notification of their intentions in this respect having been conveyed to the signatories on August 6, 1930. The Convention terminated as stated above in August 1931. In order to correct the records in this matter, Mr. Shaw's letter is now attached herewith to be incorporated into the Department's files.

see 853

Wallace Murray

HSV

HSV/GC

767.68119/851

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
RECEIVED
APR 3 1934
DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS

1664 Macombs Road
New York, N.Y.

April 2 1934

March 28, 1934

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
MAR 30 1934
DIVISION OF
WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

DIVISION OF PROTOCOL
AND
CONFERENCES
MAR 29 1934

MAR 30 1934
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

State Department
Division of International Conferences
Washington, D.C.

Gentlemen:

In Re: Lausanne Conferences 1922-1923

Please send me all available material including, if possible, minutes, records of proceedings, and draft terms of the Lausanne Conferences of Nov. 1922-July 1923. The proceedings of the second conference beginning in April 1923 are of special interest to me.

I would appreciate very much a response to my request at the very earliest moment, as this material is needed very soon for the completion of research on the above mentioned conferences. Your prompt attention will oblige.

Respectfully yours,

David M. Freeman

David M. Freeman

FILED
APR 3 1934

April 2 1934

767.68119/854

Mr. David M. Freeman,

1664 Macombs Road,

New York, New York.

S i r:

In response to your letter of March 28, 1934, requesting material concerning the Lausanne Conferences of 1922 to 1923, the Department regrets that it has no material for distribution on this subject. It is suggested that the files of the New York Public Library may contain such data as you may require in regard to this matter.

Very truly yours,

For the Secretary of State:

Wallace Murray
Chief, Division of Near Eastern Affairs.

HSV

NE HSV/LVD

Mar. 31. 1934

OR

June 29 1934.

No. 454

767.68119/854A

~~711.672 STRAITS/18~~

The Honorable

Robert Worth Bingham,

American Embassador,

London.

Sir:

I enclose a copy of a recent press article regarding the alleged intention of the Turkish Government to endeavor to obtain a revision of the Convention relating to the Régime of the Straits, signed at Lausanne on July 24, 1923, so as to permit the construction of fortifications in the Dardanelles. Articles of a similar character have appeared in the press in recent weeks but the Department has been unable to ascertain whether they actually represent the viewpoint of the Turkish Government.

note 867.0145

I shall be appreciative if you will make discreet inquiries with a view to determining what, if any, action, formal or informal, the Turkish authorities may have taken vis-à-vis the British Government looking toward a revision of the Straits Convention, as well as any information you may be able to obtain regarding the attitude of the British Government in this matter.

Very truly yours,

For the Secretary of State:

William Phillips

Enclosure:
Press article.

NE PHA/GC

JUN 29 1934

CR

WE

6/27/34
amw

A true copy of the signed original

June 29 1934

No. 469

The Honorable

Jesse Isidor Straus,

American Ambassador,

Paris.

Sir:

I enclose a copy of a recent press article regarding the alleged intention of the Turkish Government to endeavor to obtain a revision of the Convention relating to the Régime of the Straits, signed at Lausanne on July 24, 1923, so as to permit the construction of fortifications in the Dardanelles. Articles of a similar character have appeared in the press in recent weeks but the Department has been unable to ascertain whether they actually represent the viewpoint of the Turkish Government.

I shall be appreciative if you will make discreet inquiries with a view to determining what, if any, action, formal or informal, the Turkish authorities may have taken vis-à-vis the French Government looking toward a revision of the Straits Convention, as well as any information you may be able to obtain regarding the attitude of the French Government in this matter.

Very truly yours,

For the Secretary of State:

William Phillips

Enclosure:
Press article.

NE PHA/GC

JUN 29 1934

6/27/34 amw

A true copy of the signed original.

767.68119/854B
~~711.672 STRAITS/19~~

June 29 1934.

No. 542

The Honorable

Joseph C. Grew,

American Ambassador,

Tokyo.

Sir:

I enclose a copy of a recent press article regarding the alleged intention of the Turkish Government to endeavor to obtain a revision of the Convention relating to the Régime of the Straits, signed at Lausanne on July 24, 1923, so as to permit the construction of fortifications in the Dardanelles. Articles of a similar character have appeared in the press in recent weeks but the Department has been unable to ascertain whether they actually represent the viewpoint of the Turkish Government.

I shall be appreciative if you will make discreet inquiries with a view to determining what, if any, action, formal or informal, the Turkish authorities may have taken vis-à-vis the Japanese Government looking toward a revision of the Straits Convention, as well as any information you may be able to obtain regarding the attitude of the Japanese Government in this matter.

Very truly yours,

For the Secretary of State:

William Phillips

Enclosure:
Press article.

NE FHA/GC

JUN 29 1934

A true copy of the signed orig. incl.

767.68119/8540

~~711.672 STRAITS/20~~

June 29 1934.

No. 242

The Honorable

Breckinridge Long,

American Ambassador,

Rome.

Sir:

I enclose a copy of a recent press article regarding the alleged intention of the Turkish Government to endeavor to obtain a revision of the Convention relating to the Régime of the Straits, signed at Lausanne on July 24, 1923, so as to permit the construction of fortifications in the Dardanelles. Articles of a similar character have appeared in the press in recent weeks but the Department has been unable to ascertain whether they actually represent the viewpoint of the Turkish Government.

I shall be appreciative if you will make discreet inquiries with a view to determining what, if any, action, formal or informal, the Turkish authorities may have taken vis-à-vis the Italian Government looking toward a revision of the Straits Convention, as well as any information you may be able to obtain regarding the attitude of the Italian Government in this matter.

Very truly yours,

For the Secretary of State:

William Phillips

Enclosure:
Press article.

NE PHA/GC

HSV

JUN 29 1934

CR

6/27/34 amw

true copy of the signed original

767.68119/854D
~~711.672 STRAITS/21~~

June 29 1934.

Prentiss B. Gilbert, Esquire,

American Consul,

Geneva, Switzerland.

Sir:

I enclose a copy of a recent press article regarding the alleged intention of the Turkish Government to endeavor to obtain a revision of the Convention relating to the Régime of the Straits, signed at Lausanne on July 24, 1923, so as to permit the construction of fortifications in the Dardanelles. Articles of a similar character have appeared in the press in recent weeks but the Department has been unable to ascertain whether they actually represent the viewpoint of the Turkish Government.

I shall be appreciative if you will make discreet inquiries with a view to determining what, if any, action, formal or informal, the Turkish authorities may have taken before the League of Nations looking to a revision of the Straits Convention, as well as any information you may be able to obtain regarding the attitude of the principal naval powers in this matter.

Very truly yours,

For the Secretary of State:

William Phillips

Enclosure:
Press article.

NE RHA/GG

JUN 29 1934

6/27/34 am 10

A true copy of the signed original

~~711.672 STRAITS/22~~
767.68119/854E

June 29 1934.

No. 87

The Honorable

Robert P. Skinner,

American Ambassador,

Istanbul.

Sir:

I enclose a copy of a recent press article regarding the alleged intention of the Turkish Government to endeavor to obtain a revision of the Convention relating to the Régime of the Straits, signed at Lausanne on July 24, 1923, so as to permit the construction of fortifications in the Dardanelles. Articles of a similar character have appeared in the press in recent weeks but the Department has been unable to ascertain whether they actually represent the viewpoint of the Turkish Government.

I shall be appreciative if you will make discreet inquiries with a view to determining whether the Turkish authorities have taken or propose to take any action looking toward a revision of the Straits Convention. Any other information you may be able to obtain on this general subject will be helpful to the Department in its consideration of the matter.

In connection with this general question I invite your attention to the Department's instruction No. 364/15 of July 28, 1931, requesting an expression of the Embassy's views on the suggestions made by the Navy Department in a letter of July 13, 1931, a copy of which was enclosed. I should be glad to have an expression of your views as to the desirability of proposing to the Turkish Government at this time the negotiation of

note 111.672 Straits

an

767.68119/854F
~~711.672 STRAITS/23~~

an agreement covering the rights of the United States in the navigation of the Straits. Such an agreement might appropriately provide substantially as follows:

"The commercial vessels and aircraft and war vessels and aircraft of the United States of America shall enjoy complete liberty of navigation and passage in the Straits of the Dardanelles, the Sea of Marmora, and the Bosphorus, on a basis of equality with similar vessels and aircraft of the most favored nation."

For your further information I should add that it would appear to be desirable to conclude an agreement covering the rights of American vessels and aircraft in the Straits prior to the conclusion of a consular convention with Turkey, for upon the entrance into force of the latter instrument the United States would no longer be able to invoke the provisions of paragraph numbered three of the exchange of notes of February 17, 1927.

Very truly yours,

For the Secretary of State:

William Phillips

Enclosure:
Press article.

NE PHA/GC

JUN 29 1934

6/27/34

A true copy of the signed orig.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
JUL 9 1934
DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

SECRETARY OF STATE
JUL 5 1934
NOTED

THE UNDER SECRETARY
JUL 5 1934
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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1934 DEPARTMENT OF STATE
1934 JUL 11 AM 9 45

DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

July 2, 1934.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
JUL 10 1934
WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS

Note 867.0145

During a call from the Turkish Ambassador last Saturday I asked him whether there was any truth in recent press reports that the Turkish Government intended to press for a revision of the Straits Convention negotiated during the Lausanne Conference in 1923.

The Ambassador stated that according to his understanding the matter had been mentioned by the Turkish Foreign Minister during the Geneva Disarmament Conference but that after conversations with Sir John Simon it had been agreed to let the matter rest for the time being. The Ambassador added that his Government was naturally concerned over the fact that under the above-mentioned Convention fortifications are forbidden in the Straits of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus while the Disarmament Conference is considering the advisability of abolishing heavy mobile artillery. If the Straits are to remain unfortified, the Ambassador added, Turkey obviously could not forego the use of such artillery in times of emergency. Turkey therefore considers that the only reasonable solution of the problem is for her to be permitted to fortify the Straits for her own protection and in order to safeguard the freedom of passage.

The Ambassador mentioned the fact that we were not parties to the Straits Convention, and I stated that thought was now being

FILED
JUL 11 1934

767.68119/855
711.672 STRAITS/24

being given to the best means of regularizing this situation in view of the fact that the most-favored-nation treatment in passage through the Straits which was accorded us in the unratified American-Turkish Treaty of Lausanne had not figured in any subsequently negotiated agreement with the Turkish Government.

Wallace Murray

WSM/GC

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Paris, July 10, 1934

No. 1037

Subject: Turkish desire for Revision of the Straits Convention -

FOR DISTRIBUTION - CHECK Yes No
To the Field
In U. S. A.
Copy to Embassy, Istanbul

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
JUL 30 1934
WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

Copy Transmitted by the Commercial Office (A-C/O) To Istanbul

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
JUL 25 1934
DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

8/1/34

767.68 119/856
~~71.672 STRAITS/25~~

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

The receipt is respectfully acknowledged of the Department's Instruction No. 469, June 29, 1934, enclosing a press article regarding the alleged intention of the Turkish Government to endeavor to obtain a revision of the Convention relating to the Regime of the Straits, signed at Lausanne on July 24, 1923, so as to permit the construction of fortifications in the Dardanelles, and directing that discreet inquiries be made with regard to what action, if any, the Turkish authorities may have taken with the French Government, and as to the attitude of the latter Government in the premises.

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MR. .....

Mr. Tuck, First Secretary of Embassy, called today upon M. de Saint-Quentin, Chief of the Division of Asia and Africa at the Quai d'Orsay, and there is transmitted herewith a memorandum of the interview.

It will be seen that M. de Saint-Quentin gave emphatic assurance that his Government was opposed to any revision of the Straits Convention and had so informed the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs on the occasion of the latter's visit to Paris and, previously and subsequently thereto, on several occasions, in Geneva. It may therefore be assumed that Tewfik Rushdi Bey had, at various times, unsuccessfully approached the French Government in an endeavor to win its support in favor of the revision of the Straits Convention.

Respectfully yours,

Theodore Marriner

Theodore Marriner
Chargé d'Affaires ad interim

enclosure

SPT/cg

Enclosure No. 1 to despatch No. 1037
of July 10, 1934, from the Embassy,
Paris, France

Paris, July 10, 1934

Memorandum of a conversation between M. de Saint-Quentin, Chief of the Division of Africa and Asia at the Quai d'Orsay, and Mr. Tuck, First Secretary of Embassy.

I called on M. de Saint-Quentin this morning and brought to his attention the press article in the NEW YORK TIMES of June 17, 1934, regarding the alleged intention of the Turkish Government to endeavor to obtain a revision of the Convention relating to the Régime of the Straits so as to permit the construction of fortifications in the Dardanelles. I inquired of him what the attitude of the French Government was and whether it had, at any time, been approached by the Turkish authorities with regard to a possible revision of that Convention.

M. de Saint-Quentin replied emphatically that his Government was opposed to a revision of the Straits Convention that would permit the construction of fortifications in the Dardanelles and that in this attitude it shared the British point of view. He added that the French Government had so informed Tewfik Rushdi Bey on the occasion of his last visit to Paris and at other times in Geneva. He admitted, however, that the Turkish Government's position was sound, for the MacDonald Plan, while providing for the abolition of heavy land armaments, permitted the use of large calibre guns on battleships, which would certainly prove a grave handicap to the Turkish defense of the Straits in time of war. Under the circumstances, therefore, he was of the opinion that in any disarmament convention which may be concluded in

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the future, it might prove necessary to make certain "dérogations" (exceptions) in favor of Turkey, in this respect.

He added that the matter of the demilitarized zones of Thrace, provided for in the Separate Convention referred to in Article 24 of the Lausanne Treaty, was connected, in a sense, with the question, and might be included in any demands for revision which Turkey might make in the future.

S. P. T.

SPT/cg

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

RECEIVED July 12, 1934.
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

No. 607.

1934 JUL 24 PM 2 44

Subject: Turkish Demands for the Fortification of the Dardanelles.

DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
JUL 27 1934
WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

767.68119/857
767.672 STRAITS/26

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY
AUG 1 1934

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To Istanbul
8/1/34

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
JUL 25 1934
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington.

Sir:

With reference to the Department's instruction No. 242 of June 29, 1934, concerning the alleged intention of the Turkish Government to endeavor to obtain a revision of the Convention relating to the Regime of the Straits, signed at Lausanne on July 24, 1923, so as to permit the construction of fortifications in the Dardanelles, I have the honor to inform the Department that as a result of discreet inquiries made with regard to this subject the following information was obtained:

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An official of the Foreign Office stated that it is believed that the Turkish Government has accumulated stores of war material immediately outside the unfortified zones which would be moved promptly into those zones in the event of war, but he made no reference to any actual fortifications. The official stated that he was not aware that the Turkish Government had taken any action up to the present, formal or informal, vis-à-vis the Italian Government, looking toward a revision of the Straits Convention, but he added that it was felt such action might be taken at any time. While the official made no statement as to the attitude of the Italian Government in the matter, he ventured to say that it would appear that should the Turkish Government make such a demand, it would be merely asking for the approval of a situation which might be regarded as already practically existing.

Respectfully yours,

Breckinridge Long

Breckinridge Long.

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EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

LONDON, July 13, 1934.

No. 824

SUBJECT: The Lausanne Convention Relating to the Régime of the Straits.

767.68119/858
711.672 STRAITS/27
AM RECD
DEPT. OF STATE DIV. COM. & REC.
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE
JUL 24 1934
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AUG 3 1934

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to refer to the Department's instruction No. 454 of June 29, 1934, enclosing a copy of a press article dated June 17 regarding the alleged intention of the Turkish Government to endeavor to obtain a revision of the Convention relating to the Régime of the Straits, signed at Lausanne on July 24, 1923, so as to permit the construction of fortifications in the Dardanelles. The Embassy was directed to endeavor to ascertain what, if any, action, formal or informal, the Turkish authorities may have taken vis-à-vis the British

Government/

Government looking toward a revision of the Straits Convention, as well as any information it might be able to obtain regarding the attitude of the British Government in this matter

The Department will recall that on June 11 Sir John Simon made a statement in the House of Commons in response to a question on this subject. A copy of that statement was transmitted to the Department under date of June 19, and doubtless crossed the instruction under reference.

1/ A further copy from Hansard is enclosed herewith for convenient reference.

A member of the Embassy staff took the matter up with the appropriate official of the Foreign Office, who, as it happens, drafted Sir John Simon's above-mentioned statement. He said that aside from the steps taken over a year ago by the Turkish Delegate before the General Commission of the Disarmament Conference at Geneva, he was not aware that the Turkish Government had taken any action of a formal character with respect to this question, but since that time the Turks had on various occasions alluded to the subject in conversations with British officials, as indicated in the statement in Parliament. When Sir John Simon was in Geneva the end of May he mentioned the question to the Turkish Foreign Minister, who assured him that in the present circumstances the Turkish Government did not desire to pursue the matter.

After/

After reading the press clipping of June 17 enclosed in the Department's instruction under reference, the Foreign Office official said that the Turkish Foreign Minister remained in Geneva some time after his conversation with Sir John Simon, and that in any event the article was evidently based on information obtained in Turkey prior to that conversation, as since that time the Foreign Office and the Turkish Government have considered the matter dropped. He said that the line taken with the Turkish Government was that Turkey had earned an excellent reputation for abiding by her treaties, and it would be most unfortunate should she take any action which would alter this. The plea of the Turks that they had as much right as Germany to a revision of the treaties was countered with the argument that there was no analogy since in the case of Germany the Treaty was imposed, while in the case of Turkey the treaties and conventions were negotiated by the Allies in conference with Turkey.

The official said that the Turkish arguments before the General Commission of the Disarmament Conference at Geneva in 1933 were based on the MacDonald Plan to eliminate heavy mobile artillery, the Turks insisting that in such a case they would be left at a great disadvantage in protecting the Straits, but since the MacDonald Plan had failed this point was purely academic.

As to the attitude of the British Government in the matter, the official said he was glad the Turkish

Foreign/

Foreign Minister had agreed to drop the question and that the Foreign Office felt that the less said about it the better.

Respectfully yours,

For the Ambassador:

Ray Atherton,
Counselor of Embassy.

Enclosure:

1. Extract from Hansard, June 11, 1934.

HM/MVB

Enclosure No. 1 to despatch No. 824 of July 13, 1934
from the Embassy at London, England.

SOURCE: PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES,
House of Commons,
11 June 1934.
London. Page 1326.

TURKEY (STRAITS CONVENTION).

5. **Mr. RHYS DAVIES** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether he has received any communications regarding the desire of the Turkish Government for a modification of the Straits Convention of 1923; and what is the attitude of His Majesty's Government on this matter?

11. **Captain CUNNINGHAM - REID** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs what representations have been received from the Turkish Government regarding the demilitarised zone adjoining the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus; and what attitude he has adopted in this matter?

Sir J. SIMON: The question of the possible modification of certain provisions of the Lausanne peace settlement, dealing with the demilitarised zones in the Straits, was tentatively raised over a year ago by the Turkish delegate before the General Commission of the Disarmament Conference at Geneva. It has not formed the subject of specific representations to His Majesty's Government. The question having, however, more than once been alluded to by Turkish Ministers in conversation, I took a recent opportunity of mentioning it to the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs at Geneva. His Excellency then assured me that in present circumstances the Turkish Government did not propose to pursue the matter. In these circumstances the question of the attitude of His Majesty's Government no longer arises.

PM RECD

NO. 956 Political

AMERICAN CONSULATE,

Geneva, Switzerland, July 12, 1934.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
JUL 25 1934
DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
JUL 25 1934
DIVISION OF WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

JUL 24 34

SUBJECT: Alleged Intention of the Turkish Government to obtain a Revision of the Convention relating to the Régime of the Straits.

1—1055 GPO

767.68119/859
~~711.672 STRAITS/28~~

THE HONORABLE,
THE SECRETARY OF STATE,
WASHINGTON.

Embassy, Istanbul

Istanbul 8/2/34

SIR:

I have the honor to refer to the Department's instruction dated June 29, 1934 enclosing a copy of an article appearing in the NEW YORK TIMES of June 17, 1934 respecting the alleged intention of the Turkish Government to endeavor to obtain a revision of the Convention relating to the régime of the Straits and instructing me to obtain information regarding any developments which may have taken place in Geneva concerning this matter. This question does not appear to have come directly before the League of Nations in any manner. It has, however, been raised in the General Disarmament Conference and I submit the following developments which, according to my information, took place in the Conference in this connection.

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AUG 6 - 1934

Note
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On March 16, 1933 the United Kingdom Delegation to the Disarmament Conference presented a Draft Convention, Article 96 of which reads as follows:

"The present Convention, together with the further Conventions to be concluded in accordance with Article 95 and Article 32, will replace, as between the respective Parties to the Treaties of Versailles, St. Germain, Trianon and Neuilly, those provisions of Part V

(Military,

(Military, Naval and Air Clauses) of each of the Treaties of Versailles, St. Germain and Trianon, and of Part IV (Military, Naval and Air Clauses) of the Treaty of Neuilly, which at present limit the arms and armed forces of Germany, Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria respectively."

On March 24, 1933, during the general discussion on the Draft Convention, Cemal Hüsnü Bey, representative of Turkey, commented in part as follows concerning Article 96 of the Draft (Minutes of the General Commission, Volume II, page 366):

"While the military, air and naval clauses inserted in certain treaties were being replaced, for reasons which he would not criticize or analyze here, by the general provisions of the Disarmament Convention, it was to be observed that similar clauses found in the Treaty of Lausanne had not been mentioned. The Treaty of Lausanne contained military provisions relating to the Straits and certain parts of the European continental territory of Turkey, and those provisions must naturally undergo the same fate.

.....

.....

That which Cemal Hüsnü Bey requested should be suppressed was precisely intended to ensure that freedom of the Straits and Turkey's obligation to keep them open. Articles 3 to 9 of the Straits Convention, annexed to the Treaty of Lausanne, constituted a hindrance to that liberty and to the exercise of the obligation assumed by Turkey; those articles had now fallen into disuse, not only in anticipation of an effective disarmament Convention, but because they had lost all real and practical meaning."

In the meeting of the General Commission on March 27, 1933, Sir John Simon, summing up the general discussion concerning the British Draft Convention, answered the comments of the Turkish Delegation with regard to Article 96 of the Draft Convention as follows (Minutes of the General Commission, Volume II, page 400):

"The Turkish delegate had also noted that, while the draft Convention was destined to replace certain clauses in the peace treaties of Versailles, St. Germain, Trianon and Neuilly, there was no indication that it would replace clauses in the Treaty of Lausanne. That comment proceeded from a misapprehension as to the application of the final article (Article 96) of the

United Kingdom draft Convention. The clauses of the peace treaties in question were defined in Article 96 as "those provisions . . . which at present limit the arms and armed forces of Germany, Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria respectively". But, as the Turkish delegation was aware, the Treaty of Lausanne contained no clauses of a corresponding character. The arms and armed forces of Turkey were not restricted by treaty, and since Article 96 of the draft effected a substitution only in respect of the limit of arms and armed forces, no corresponding provision was needed in the case of Turkey."

In the meeting of the General Commission of June 1, 1933, the Turkish Delegation presented an amendment to Article 96 of the United Kingdom draft Convention which reads as follows (Minutes of the General Commission, Volume II, page 585):

"The present Convention, together with the further Conventions to be concluded in accordance with Article 95 and Article 32, will replace, as between the respective parties to the Treaties of Versailles, St. Germain, Trianon, Neuilly and Lausanne, those provisions of Part V (military, naval and air clauses) of each of the Treaties of Versailles, St. Germain, and Trianon, and of Part IV (military, naval and air clauses) of the Treaty of Neuilly, which at present limit the arms and armed forces of Germany, Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria respectively, and also the Convention in regard to the frontier of Thrace, in the Treaty of Lausanne."

Commenting on the amendment presented by the Turkish Delegation, Cemal Hüsnü Bey spoke as follows (Minutes of the General Commission, Volume II, page 585):

"The second amendment handed in by the Turkish delegation related to Article 96. It had been glad to find that this article provided for equality of rights, of which it was a strong supporter. Unfortunately, the treaties mentioned were not the only treaties that contained military clauses. Such clauses were also to be found in the Treaty of Lausanne. The question of the guarantee as to the Straits had been held over for the second reading, but there was another question, that of the military clauses relating to the frontiers of Thrace. The Turkish delegation considered that, if the General Commission decided to eliminate the military clauses in the various peace treaties, it should treat the military clauses in the Lausanne Treaty in the same way. That was only just."

It will be

It will be observed from the last speech above quoted of the Turkish representative that the question of the revision of the pertinent articles of the Treaty of Lausanne relating to the fortification of the Straits is being "held over" until the second reading of the draft Convention.

The question was again raised furing the meetings of the Disarmament Conference which have recently closed in the sense that it was the subject of unofficial conversations which took place respecting the more general European political situation which were in progress at that time. The nature of this matter is presented in Confidential Letter No. 32 issued by the European Information Center, Paris, dated June 21, 1934, page 251, and I can only confirm that the presentation in that document is also substantially my own understanding of it.

Respecting the status of the British draft convention to which I have referred above, I feel that the authorities of the Department dealing with the Disarmament Conference are fully cognizant with that detail and that thus I need not discuss it further.

As I have already stated, the question has not apparently in any manner come directly before the League. I am so informed by competent officials of the Political Section of the League Secretariat who also tell me that while aware of the unofficial discussions to which I have referred, which recently took place in Geneva, they are under the impression that the Turkish Government has no present intention of pressing this question.

Respectfully yours,

Prentiss B. Gilbert

Prentiss B. Gilbert
American Consul

PBG/GdeW/HWE

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1 copy to American Legation, Bern, Switzerland.

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JUL 27 1934
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

DAILY REPORT - JULY 26, 1934.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
JUL 30 1934
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

767.68119/860
~~711.672 STRAITS/29~~

CONFIDENTIAL.

TURKEY - In view of recent press articles to the effect that the Turkish Government was seeking a revision of the Straits Convention (a portion of the Lausanne Treaty) so as to permit the construction of fortifications in the Dardanelles, our Embassies at London, Paris, Rome, Istanbul and Tokyo were recently instructed to endeavor to obtain the viewpoints of the governments to which they were accredited. Replies have now been received from London, Paris and Rome.

The Embassy at London reports that the Turks had taken up the matter on several occasions in conversations with British officials but that no formal démarches have been made since those of over a year ago at the Disarmament Conference at Geneva. On the occasion of his recent visit to Geneva, Sir John Simon mentioned the matter to the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs who gave an assurance that in the present circumstances the Turkish Government did not desire to pursue the matter. The British Foreign Office also informed our representative that on those occasions when the subject had been brought up informally by the

Turks

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JUL 31 1934

Turks the latter had been informed that Turkey had earned an excellent reputation for abiding by its treaties and that it would be most unfortunate should she take any action which would alter this reputation. In reply to the Turks' plea that they had as much right to a revision of the treaties as the Germans, the British rejoinder was that there was a most important difference between the Treaty of Versailles and the Treaty of Lausanne, since the former had been imposed upon the Germans whereas the latter had been signed by the Turks voluntarily and after negotiation.

The Embassy at Rome \26 reports that the Turks have made no overtures to the Italians regarding the fortification of the Straits, but that the Italians consider that such a request would be merely seeking approval of an existing situation. In this connection the Italians do not assert that the Turks have actually fortified the Straits, but they do claim that the Turkish Government has accumulated stores of war material immediately outside the fortified zones and that these stores could be moved in without difficulty.

A spokesman for the French \25 Foreign Office states that his Government is emphatically opposed to any revision of the Straits Convention and that the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs had been so informed on several occasions in Geneva and even on his recent visit to Paris. It is to

be

be inferred therefore that the Turks have at least broached the subject to the French.

Newspaper talk of a Turkish effort to obtain permission to arm the Straits appears to have died down and we are inclined to believe that the Turks have probably dropped the matter for the time being at least.

Wallace Murray.

PHA/GC

From the New York Journal of Commerce

AUG 10 1934

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COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS

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August 15 1934.

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~~711.672 STRAITS/30~~

TURKEY SAID TO PLAN DARDANELLES FORT

Step Would Give Command of Straits, Enabling Closing Them to Enemy Fleet

LONDON, Aug. 9. (UP)—Now that Europe has plunged headlong into an armaments race and the menace of future war is casting its shadow across the continent, Turkey is reliably reported to be contemplating fortification of the Dardanelles.

The high importance of such a move becomes clear when it is realized that these straits, from the viewpoint of military strategy, completely dominate the passage of war vessels and other navigation between the Mediterranean and Aegean seas on the one hand and the Black Sea on the other. Closing of the straits to enemy fleets in time of war might easily be an issue of life and death to Turkey and Russia whose long Black Sea coasts otherwise would be exposed to devastating attack and invasion.

Advices which have reached diplomats here indicate that Turkey has been considering confronting the world with an accomplished fact by building permanent fortifications at the straits in defiance of the Lausanne Treaty of July 24, 1923. The recent expulsion of non-Turkish citizens from the demilitarized Dardanelles zone has been regarded as further evidence of that intention.

Seen as Defensive Step

Turkish fortification of the Dardanelles generally would be construed as a defensive measure against the Italian and British navies. The only other great power which might threaten Turkey's dominance of the Dardanelles is Russia, and the Soviet Union is on terms of the most cordial friendship, if not actual alliance, with the Turks. As Kemal Pasha, the Turkish President, and his Government have been convinced that the Russian ambition to conquer the straits, which in prewar days formed a keynote of czarist policy, has been definitely abandoned by the bolsheviks, Turkey's fortification plans would not be aimed against the red navy.

When the peace treaty with Turkey was signed at Lausanne eleven years ago, peace in Europe and Asia Minor seemed assured for a long time. Signatories of that treaty—Turkey, Britain, France, Italy, Japan, Bulgaria, Greece, Rumania, Russia and Jugoslavia—recognized freedom of transit by sea and air through the Dardanelles the Bosphorus and Sea of Marmora, altogether known as the straits. Article 4 of the treaty's annex provided that both shores of the Dardanelles should be demilitarized for a distance fifteen miles inland.

Article 6 Is Cited

"There shall exist in the demilitarized zones," declared Article 6, "no fortifications, no permanent artillery organization, no submarine engines of war other than submarine vessels, no military aerial organization and no naval base."

In fact, police were the only armed forces allowed in the demilitarized zone and their "armaments" were specifically limited to revolvers, swords, rifles and four Lewis guns per hundred police, artillery being excluded.

In case of a war threat or war itself, the Lausanne signatories agreed to resort to "all the means that the Council of the League of Nations may decide upon."

After the experiences of Manchukuo, Chaco, Letitia, Corfu and other "incidents" and the alleged inability of the League Council to cope with them, Turkey's confidence in the Geneva institution's ability to prevent war has sunk to a level somewhat below zero. The reputed impotence of the league to forestall armed conflict has led the Turks to regard steel, iron, cement, guns and shells as a safer form of insurance than the vague promises of the Lausanne treaty.

"A fortress in the hand is worth two treaties in the league's vaults," appears to have become Turkey's motto.

Britain, Italy Disquieted

Britain and Italy, whose dominance of the Mediterranean waters is based

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distance fifteen miles inland.

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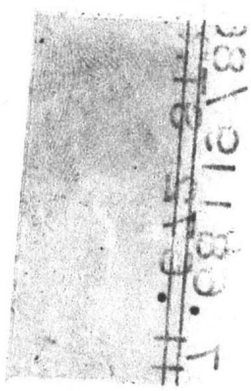
"A fortress in the hand is worth two treaties in the league's vaults," appears to have become Turkey's motto.

Britain, Italy Disquieted

Britain and Italy, whose dominance of the Mediterranean waters is based on the friendliest collaboration, are understood to be gravely disquieted by Turkey's threatened scrapping of the vital clauses of the Lausanne Treaty and consequent fortification of the straits in blunt defiance of that pact.

In the case of Germany and the Versailles Treaty, however, the British and Italians candidly admit than an accord, imposed upon a vanquished nation by victors, should be subject to change. Turkey's attitude toward Lausanne is similar; and to this argument is added the Turkish contention that, if the League Council merited confidence as a peace guardian in 1923, it has forfeited that confidence in 1934.

In the world's preparations for a coming war, fortification of the Dardanelles—the gate to Asia—is a crucial issue, to which the powers concerned will hardly be indifferent.



No. 107

August 15 1934.

To the American Ambassador,

Istanbul, Turkey.

The Secretary of State refers to the Department's instruction No. 87 of June 29, 1934, regarding the alleged desire of the Turkish Government to obtain a revision of the Straits Convention so that the Straits might be fortified, and encloses a copy of an article on this subject which appeared in the NEW YORK JOURNAL OF COMMERCE of August 10, 1934. The Secretary of State would be pleased to receive the Embassy's comments on this article.

Enclosure:
Article entitled "Turkey said to plan Dardanelles Fort" from New York Journal of Commerce, August 10, 1934

NE PHA/LVD

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AUG 14 1934

A true copy of the signed original.

767.68119/861
~~411.672 STRAITS 31~~

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 279 Istanbul, Turkey, June 12, 1934.

Subject: Turkey and the Dardanelles.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
A-C/6
JUL 26 1934
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE
DEPT. OF STATE DIV. COM. & REC.
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note 867.0145

JUL 26 1934
JUL 18 1934
DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D.C.

Sir:

A good deal has been said of late about Turkey's intention to seek some modification of the Straits regime at Geneva during the recent attendance of the Foreign Minister, Tevfik Rüştü Bey, at the session of the League of Nations, but the Minister has now returned to Turkey and no formal steps of any kind appear to have been taken with regard to the Dardanelles. On the contrary, as he passed through Bulgaria he took occasion to say that Turkey had not raised the issue "because she was in a position to defend the Straits." Again:

"Even

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JUL 27 1934

"Even if some restrictions exist, we are capable of defending the passage. Moreover, we need the permission of nobody to do it."

Technically, the Foreign Minister was right. The Straits Convention, Article 4, declares that the shores of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus shall be demilitarized, and that within the demilitarized zones no fortifications shall be set up, but Turkey retains the right to send her armed forces through the demilitarized zones and the Turkish fleet has the right to anchor in territorial waters. In fact, in these days of long distance guns and other weapons, the treaty provisions place small restraint upon Turkey in this matter. It is safe to say that the people of this country are far less concerned over the demilitarization of the Straits area than they are over the continued existence of the Straits Commission, which is a thorn in the flesh that they would gladly have removed.

In a brief historical review the Deputy, Ahmet Şükrü, in his "La Turquie," traces the main facts up to today. Until Russia reached the Black Sea, that body of water was practically an Ottoman lake, the entrance to which was opened and closed by the Sultans according to their pleasure. The Sultans set up a rule that the Straits should be closed to war vessels and obtained acceptance of this rule by all of the States with which the Porte carried on relations.

Thus

Thus matters continued until 1833 when the Sultan Mahmud signed a treaty which guaranteed the opening of the Straits in favor of the Russians in order that he might have the aid of Tsar Nicholas against Mehmet Ali of Egypt. The British Government, disturbed by this treaty, brought about an international engagement eight years later under which the Straits were closed to ships of war. In this way the opening or closing of the Straits ceased to be a purely Turkish matter and in 1841 became international. Then came the demilitarization of the Black Sea in 1856, followed in 1871 by the abrogation of the clauses concerning the demilitarization of that Sea. Furthermore the Sultanate obtained the right to open the Straits whenever it desired "to ships of war of friendly States." This regime continued until the beginning of the Great War in 1914.

Respectfully yours,

Robert P. Skinner.

880.

RPS/lr

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

September 4, 1934.

WSM:

It seems to me that the attached despatch from Istanbul furnishes very little information as to the desirability of our proposing to the Turks the negotiation of a treaty giving us specific rights as to the navigation of the Straits. About all the Ambassador says is that he agrees with the Department that in the long run it would be well for us to have our rights set forth specifically. All of us would agree with that. The question is: are the Turks willing to negotiate such a treaty? The only answer that Mr. Skinner gives to this question is that he does not see how the Turks could refuse. I wonder if the problem is as simple at that. For example, the Embassy does not appear to have considered whether the Turks would like at this time to reaffirm the freedom of the Straits. In view of their recent efforts to obtain a revision of the Straits Convention I am not at all sure that they would willingly set the seal of their approval on a treaty which would reaffirm those rights which were granted several years ago. I think that we should ask for further information before blindly going ahead to make a formal proposal.

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 334 Istanbul, Turkey, July 20, 1934.

Subject: Turkey and the Straits Convention.

Division of
FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS
SEP 11 1934
Department of State

Instruction to Embassy, Istanbul 9/7/34 PHA/JD

DEPT. OF STATE DIV. COM. & REC.

AUG 28 1934

FOR DISTRIBUTION ... Yes No

September 10 1934.

767.68119/863
~~711.672 STRAITS/32~~

note to 711.672 Straits

AUG 20 1934
DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
SEP 11 1934
DIVISION OF WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

FILED
SEP 13 1934

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington, D.C.

Sir:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the Department's instruction No. 87, dated June 29, 1934, in regard to the alleged intention of the Turkish Government to endeavor to obtain a revision of the Convention relating to the Régime of the Straits, signed at Lausanne on July 24th, 1923. The Department by now has received my No. 279 of June 17, 1934 indicating that the Turkish Government has no present intention of raising the issue officially. It has been brought to my attention in this connection that even if authority were obtained

for

for the construction of permanent fortifications in the Dardanelles the enormous cost of such defensive works probably would prevent their realization without long delay. In the meantime, the activity of the Turkish Government in improving the highway to Gallipoli, and one which leads to Chanak, and the reorganization of the military forces in the Straits Area, show that the Government is keenly interested in all that relates to the Straits and is preparing itself by every means within its power to defend them in case of attack. I shall acquaint the Department from time to time with any definite facts that I am able to obtain on this subject.

I now advert to the Department's instruction No. 364 of July 15 28, 1931, as to the desirability of proposing to the Turkish Government the negotiation of an agreement covering the rights of the United States in the navigation of the Straits. There is no doubt that at present we enjoy complete liberty of navigation and passage in the Straits of the Dardanelles, the Sea of Marmara, and the Bosphorus, and are practically guaranteed this liberty by the Straits Convention, notwithstanding that we are not among the signatory powers. Should we now conclude a special agreement of our own, we would gain nothing which we do not already enjoy. Nevertheless, I concur in what I take to be the opinion of the Department that, on a long view, it is desirable that we obtain protection

on

on our own behalf, and I do not perceive how it would be possible for the Turkish Government to refuse to give its assent to proposals in this sense. Thus far, as the holiday season is now on, I have had no opportunity of discussing the matter informally with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and perhaps it would be well, before I did so, if I were instructed by the Department that it definitely desires to conclude such an agreement as is suggested in its instruction No. 87.

Respectfully yours,

Robert P. Skinner.

720

RPS/lr

RECD

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
ROME, August 23, 1934.

No. 673.

Subject: The Straits Regime.

DIV. COM. & REC.

SEP 6 34

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
SEP 7 1934
DIVISION OF
WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

CONFIDENTIAL

[redacted]

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
A-C/C
SEP 7 1934
ASSISTANT SECRETARY
OF STATE

FOR DISTRIBUTION
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Embassy, Istanbul
O N I

SEP 10 1934

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
SEP 6 - 1934
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Copy Transmitted by The
Commercial Office (A.C/C)
To Istanbul.
9/8/34 CR

1 copy in IVE

Sir:

With further reference to the Department's instruction No. 242 of June 29, 1934 concerning the alleged intention of the Turkish Government to endeavor to obtain a revision of the convention relating to the regime of the Straits, signed at Lausanne on July 24, 1923, so as to permit the construction of fortifications in the Dardanelles, I have the honor to inform the Department that on August 17, 1934 the MESSAGGERO published an editorial with regard to the question of the present regime of the Straits, a summary of which is hereto attached.

FILED
SEP 13 1934

767.68119/864 STRAITS/33

on

On the basis of that editorial, a member of this Embassy inquired of an official at the Foreign Office about Italy's attitude in that respect and was informed that "Italy prefers that the control of the Straits be left in the hands of the Turks." With regard to the French attitude, that official ventured to state that France nominally favors the opening of the Straits but in view of its present relations with Russia he felt that France would not oppose the desires of Turkey.

Respectfully yours,

Alexander Kirk.

Alexander Kirk,
Charge d'Affaires ad interim.

Enclosure: Summary of editorial.
CAB/eh
820

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4 Carbon Copies
Received FP
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Enclosure No. 1 to Despatch No. 673 of August 23, 1934, from the Embassy at Rome.

MESSAGGERO, Rome,
August 17, 1934.

The Gateway of the Mediterranean.

(Summary)

Among present-day naval problems, the regime of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus is the most important to the Mediterranean countries. While the proposal made at the Disarmament Conference in May 1933 to abolish the artillery defense of the Straits (which Turkey declared she would not accept unless the demilitarized zones were done away with) has been placed on the shelf along with all other disarmament proposals, this question continues to be discussed in the international press, particularly that of Russia, Turkey, and Germany. The Constantinople TURQUIE recently affirmed that the abolishment of demilitarized zones would enable Turkey to assure the freedom of the Straits, a duty which the League of Nations is no longer in a position to fulfill.

Russia, interested in defending her own doors rather than in having access to those of others, is said to be negotiating with Turkey in respect to the Straits, offering Turkey her assistance in case of need, while the latter country has not yet made up its mind to enter into any defensive alliance of that sort. Great Britain, formerly a champion of the closing of the Straits, is today, in view of her friendly relations with France and Italy and the virtual disappearance of a German fleet from the North Sea, in favor of opening the Straits. That country, therefore, as well as the Mediterranean powers, is much interested in the potential conclusion of a new Russo-Turkish Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi (1833) whereby Turkey might agree to close the Straits to Russia's enemies.

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Tokyo, August 24, 1934.

No. 940.

Subject: Straits Convention.

Division of
FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS
SEP 12 1934
Department of State

PM RECD
DEPT. OF STATE
DIV. COM & REC
SEP - 8 34

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
A-C/C
SEP 19 1934
ASSISTANT SECRETARY
OF STATE

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To the Field
In U. S. A.
Copy to
Embassy,
Istanbul, Apa

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
SEP 10 1934
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

767.68119/865
~~711.672 STRAITS/34~~

Copy Transmitted by the
Commercial Office (A.C/C)
To
Istanbul
9/19/34

FILED
SEP 20 1934

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington.

Sir:

In compliance with the Department's instruction No. 542, dated June 29, 1934, I have made discreet inquiries in an endeavor to determine what, if any, action, formal or informal, the Turkish authorities may have taken vis-à-vis the Japanese Government looking toward a revision of the Straits Convention. I have also endeavored to obtain information regarding the attitude of the Japanese Government in this matter.

Mr.

Mr. Horinouchi, Chief of the Bureau of American Affairs at the Foreign Office, who was informally and discreetly consulted, told a member of my staff that the Japanese Government had not been approached in any way in this question but that Mr. Horinouchi recalled that the Turkish Government had proposed the matter at the last General Disarmament Conference.

He stated that he could not, unfortunately, indicate what the attitude of the Japanese Government would be in the event that it should be approached by the Turkish Government because "present conditions and circumstances might have altered at that time."

Respectfully yours,

Joseph C. Grew.

500
ESC:l

Copy to Embassy, Istanbul.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
RECEIVED
SEP 17 1934
DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
SEP 15 1934
DIVISION OF
WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
SEP 17 1934
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

WAR DEPARTMENT
SEP 17 1934

2044-341

Subject: Military Precautions in the Dardanelles.

The London "Times" on August 24 carries the following review of the "Straits Situation" in Turkey:

TURKEY AND STRAITS

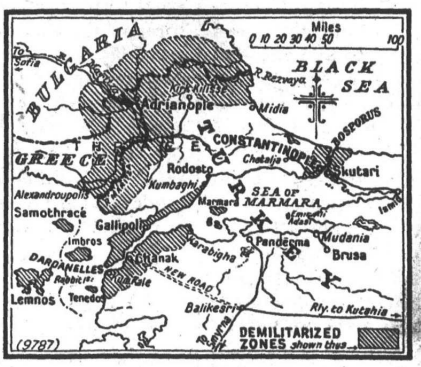
WEAKNESS OF TI LEAGUE

MILITARY PRECAUTIO

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

At the first Disarmament Conference in March, 1933, Tewfik Rushdi Bey, the Turkish Foreign Minister, formally demanded, on behalf of his Government, that the clauses of the Lausanne Treaty which prohibited Turkey from fortifying the Straits should be cancelled. Since then a number of events have occurred to focus attention on this narrow waterway, which played so vital a part in the Great War.

Last November the Soviet special mission, which under General Voroshiloff, People's Commissar for War and Marine, attended the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the Turkish Republic, paid a visit to the Dardanelles. Three months



ago the Ghazi himself made a tour of inspection in that area, and in June the Shah, accompanied by the Ghazi, General Ismet Pasha, the Turkish Prime Minister, and Tewfik Rushdi Bey, visited the European littoral of the Dardanelles. In June, too, it was generally expected that Tewfik Rushdi Bey would again raise the question of refortification at Geneva.

NO PERMANENT WORKS

Far from doing so, however, he gave Sir John Simon an assurance that Turkey had no intention of seeking authority to fortify the Straits. Again, on his way home from Geneva, he assured Bulgarian journalists at Sofia railway station that Turkey was not proposing to raise the question for the present; but, almost in the same breath, he added that she was able and ready at any moment to defend any part of her territory. This remark may best be understood if we first examine the trend of Turkish feelings on the subject and see what steps have been taken during recent years to make the defence of the Straits a practicable proposition without a vast system of permanent fortifications.

When Turkey signed the Straits Convention, which was to be carried out under the auspices of the League of Nations, she did so believing that the League would really become an organization for the promotion and maintenance of the world's peace. To-day the view is held in Turkey that the League's power, far from growing, is rapidly diminishing, while European countries revert more and more to rival grouping and competition in armaments. What guarantee of the inviolability of the Straits remains to Turkey then?

In time of peace the question has no more than an academic interest. In time of war, although the Straits Convention recognizes that Turkey has the right to take measures to prevent the passage of enemy naval and air craft, thereby implying the use of heavy artillery and mines, it maintains the principle of free passage for neutral warships and merchantmen, which precludes the closing of the Straits and makes their defence impracticable. But it is in case of sudden attack or breach of her neutrality by other nations at war with one another that Turkey's position is anomalous; and it is because she is not prepared to risk the fate which befell Belgium in 1914 that Turkey wishes to be ready herself to defend the Straits. With her present views about the League of Nations, she sets little or no store by Article 18 of the Straits Convention, which makes provision for violation of the free passage or for a breach of Turkish neutrality.

A STRATEGIC ROAD

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that for some time now great activity has been displayed in the region of the Dardanelles. The railway between Kutahia and Balikesri completed two years ago is mainly strategic: an excellent motor road now runs from Balikessir to Chanak: and the railway from Smyrna to Panderma has lately been acquired by the Turkish Government. Although Turkey is prohibited from keeping troops within the demilitarized zone, nothing prevents her from maintaining a force of gendarmerie out of all proportion to the needs of the area. To bring up heavy artillery from Balikessir to prepared positions near the coast and to mine the Narrows is the work of hours. Only a few weeks ago General Shukri Naili Pasha, one of the ablest officers in the Turkish Army and for many years commander of the Constantinople Army Corps, was transferred to Balikessir, with the special mission, or so it is believed, of perfecting the system of defence of the Straits, under the direct supervision of the Ghazi, who acquired experience of that problem in the Great War.

On the Thracian side, a new post of Director-General was recently created, and it is announced that one of the principal duties of Ibrahim Tali Bey, who now fills it, will be the construction of roads. These will facilitate the movement to the Dardanelles of troops and artillery from Eastern Thrace also.

741.672 STRAITS/36 741.68119/806

Report No. 36231. Date: August 27, 1934.

HAYES A. KROGER,
Major, Infantry,
Assistant Military Attache.

No. 36231. 1st Ind.
Office of the Military Attache, American Embassy, London, England, August 27, 1934. To: The Chief, Military Intelligence Division, War Dept., Washington, D.C.

CORTLANDT PARKER,
Lt. Col., F.A.,
Mil. Atta., London.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

WE

DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

Mr. Marin

PHA

I have no particular comment to make on this despatch - have you? As for a rating. I suppose a "Good" would be the most appropriate.

I agree.

MW HSV

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DIVISION OF WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

AV

NE

Mr Alling —

Paul:

Do you care to make some informal comment for transmission to Geneva as well as an indication of an appropriate rating for this dispatch?

P. W. Morin

NO. 1110 Political.

AMERICAN CONSULATE

Geneva, Switzerland, December 4, 1934.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DEC 22 1934
DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DEC 19 1934
DIVISION OF WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: The Straits Commission - Present Status vis-à-vis the League of Nations.

RECEIVED 1055
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
1934 DEC 1 PM 1 05
DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE

THE HONORABLE
THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

SIR:

711.672 Straits/28 DEC 28 1934

I have the honor to refer to my despatch No. 956 Political dated July 12, 1934, and particularly in view of the Department's interest in this question as evinced in its instruction dated June 29/22 1934, to submit the following information on the Commission established by the Straits Convention signed at Lausanne on July 24, 1923 in execution of the Treaty of Lausanne of the same date. The Department doubtless is fully informed respecting the Commission itself and this report is therefore limited to an examination of the relations of the Commission with the League.

FILED
DEC 31 1934

Constitutional Basis of League Relations.

The constitutional basis of League relations with the Commission is provided in the following articles of the Straits Convention signed at Lausanne July 24, 1923:

ARTICLE 15.

ARTICLE 15.

"The Straits Commission will carry out its functions under the auspices of the League of Nations, and will address to the League an annual report giving an account of its activities, and furnishing all information which may be useful in the interests of commerce and navigation; with this object in view the commission will place itself in touch with the departments of the Turkish Government dealing with navigation through the Straits."

ARTICLE 13.

"The governments represented on the commission will pay the salaries of their representatives. Any incidental expenditure incurred by the commission will be borne by the said governments in the proportion laid down for the division of the expenses of the League of Nations."

Article 18 of the Convention states in part as follows:

ARTICLE 18.

. . . . . .

"Should the freedom of navigation of the Straits or the security of the demilitarized zones be imperilled by a violation of the provisions relating to freedom of passage, or by a surprise attack or some act of war or threat of war, the high contracting parties, and in any case France, Great Britain, Italy, and Japan, acting in conjunction, will meet such violation, attack, or other act of war or threat of war, by all the means that the Council of the League of Nations may decide for this purpose.

So soon as the circumstance which may have necessitated the action provided for in the preceding paragraph shall have ended, the régime of the Straits as laid down by the terms of the present convention shall again be strictly applied.

The present provision, which forms an integral part of those relating to the demilitarization and to the freedom of the Straits, does not prejudice the right and obligations of the high contracting parties under the Covenant of the League of Nations."

In addition

In addition to the provisions cited above the annex to Article 2 of the Convention stipulates that the Commission shall ascertain, on January 1 and July 1 of each year, the number of naval vessels of various categories as well as the number of naval aircraft of the strongest naval force in the Black Sea and shall inform the powers concerned. The Commission is also charged with immediately informing the powers concerned when any alteration in that force has taken place. When the Commission was first established the Chairman requested of the Secretary-General of the League that this duty should be carried out through the intermediary of the Secretariat of the League and on September 10, 1925, the Council authorized the Secretary-General to accede to this request.

The formal acceptance by the League of the relations with the Straits Commission established by the Convention did not take place, however, until June 10, 1926, when the Council had before it the first (1925) Annual Report of the Commission. On that date the Council adopted the following resolution:

> "The Council accepts the duty assigned to it by the provisions of Article 15 of the Convention relating to the Régime of the Straits, signed at Lausanne on July 24th, 1923, to the effect that the Straits Commission carries out its mission under the auspices of the League of Nations ....."

NORMAL LEAGUE PROCEDURE.

The first report of the Commission made several observations regarding the unsatisfactory nature of its status vis-à-vis the Turkish Government, and pointed out

that the

that the provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne were not being fully carried out. The report concluded with the following statement:

> "In this direction the duty of the Commission is limited by the Straits Convention to reporting the facts to the League of Nations. It is for the latter to adopt any means which may seem to it effective to hasten the application in their entirety of the principles laid down in the Treaty of Lausanne."

The Council's rapporteur, however, commenting on this section of the report, said that Article 15 of the Convention merely placed the Commission under the auspices of the League and on his suggestion the Council agreed simply to forward the Commission's report to all the signatory powers to enable them to judge for themselves what action should be taken on this communication.

This procedure was firmly established the following year when the Commission in its annual report for 1926 submitted further observations for the consideration of the Council. On that occasion the Council's rapporteur stated that "apart from exceptional circumstances, the Council should, as a first step, simply submit the report to the powers signatory to the Straits Convention. Then, if one of these powers so desires, it can request the Council to consider the merits of any suggestion the Commission may make." He then proposed the following resolution which was adopted by the Council on July 16, 1927:

"The

"The Council:

Takes note of the report which the Straits Commission, in fulfilment of its duties under the auspices of the League of Nations, has submitted to it on its work during the year 1926,

And communicates this report for any necessary action to the States signatories of the Convention and for information to the States Members of the League.

The Minutes of the present meeting shall be attached to this communication.

The Secretary-General is also authorised to communicate the Straits Commission's report and the Minutes of the present meeting, for any necessary action, to any technical organisations of the League to which the information contained in the report may be of interest.

The Council also requests the Secretary-General, as a standing rule, to forward the future reports of the Straits Commission as soon as they are received to the Members of the Council and States signatories of the Convention."

A further attempt by the Commission to obtain League action was made in 1929 when a squadron of 34 hydroplanes of the Italian Air Force flew to the Black Sea via the Straits. The consent of the Turkish Government had been obtained for the passage of the Straits, but the Commission reported to the League that the presence of 34 aircraft in the Black Sea at a time when the air force of the strongest Black Sea fleet (Soviet Russia) consisted of only 21 seaplanes, was in conflict with the provisions of the Straits Convention. The Commission's report concluded with the statement that "the Commission would be glad if the League would settle for the future the differences of interpretation in connection with the entry of naval and air forces into the Black Sea, in

order

order that no such case may recur". The Commission's report of the incident was forwarded by the Secretariat to the interested powers, but as no state saw fit to raise the question in the Council, no action was taken by the League.

Up to the present time, the League has merely acted as a medium of communication for the Commission. Two hundred copies of the Commission's Annual Report are forwarded to the Secretariat for distribution, and in accordance with a Council resolution of July 5, 1928, the Report is forwarded by the Secretariat to all members of the League as well as to all powers signatory to the Convention and to any technical organisation of the League which may be interested in the information contained in the Report. The status of the strongest Black Sea fleet is reported to the Secretary-General by a letter from the Straits Commission which is forwarded to the interested governments and appears in the OFFICIAL JOURNAL of the League.

On July 5, 1928, the Council decided that reports of the Straits Commission should not be included in its agenda unless one of the countries to which they are regularly communicated wished to raise a question in regard thereto. A brief summary of the information contained in the Commission's Annual Report has nevertheless been regularly included in the Secretary-General's report on the work of the League. This was, however, omitted from the last report of the Secretary-General. I am unable to ascertain whether

any

any special motive occasioned this omission.

League relations with the Straits Commission are handled by the Political Section of the Secretariat. It is understood that this subject will be assigned to M. Prunas, an Italian who has recently been appointed to this Section.

LEAGUE PROCEDURE IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

Since the Council has never acted under the Convention, other than as indicated above, the question of its procedure under Article 18 of the Convention has never been settled. In the event of a serious violation of the Convention, the Commission would no doubt immediately notify the League and would directly inform the interested powers as well. It appears to be clear that this action would not in itself be sufficient to require action by the Council under Article 18 of the Convention but it is probable that the Council could become seized of the question on its own initiative as well as by the action of a state signatory to the Convention.

The Convention does not stipulate whether the Council would have to decide upon what action it would recommend to the guarantor states by unanimity or by a majority vote; but it would seem that under the provisions of the League Covenant a unanimous decision of the Council would be necessary. This view is emphasized by the circumstance that at the time the Straits Convention was being drafted a proposal to provide for a two-thirds vote by the Council

in

in certain circumstances was put forward but was not incorporated in the final Convention.

POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The régime of the Straits is guaranteed by all states signatory to the Convention, but four states, Great Britain, France, Japan, and Italy are made particularly responsible. At the time the Convention was signed all four were members of the Council, while Turkey and Russia were not members of the League. Both Turkey and Russia now hold Council seats, while Japan has given notice of her withdrawal from the League. If Japan's withdrawal becomes definitive, she will then be bound by a convention to carry out the decisions of the Council upon which she could only be represented by invitation, whether in a consultative capacity or under Article 17 of the Covenant. The view here is that this circumstance would be of little consequence unless Japan should consider that the maintenance of the present régime is not in her best interests.

The representation on the Council of Turkey and the Soviet Union, in view of the present policy of friendship between these states, is important not only in respect of the contingency of Council action under Article 18 of the Convention, but also in relation to any steps which Turkey and Russia might take looking toward the abolition of the present régime. In the latter connection I was recently informed by a member of the Political Section of the

Secretariat

Secretariat that the Turkish delegate to the League had stated to him that he had no intention of bringing the question before the League at present, but my informant added that he felt that Turkey has this possibility very much in mind. Previous information on this question was submitted in my despatch No. 956 Political, dated July 12, 1934, to which I have already referred. The issue will doubtless depend on general political considerations, but in certain quarters here the view is held that the possibility of the question being raised is by no means remote.

Respectfully yours,

Prentiss B. Gilbert

American Consul.

LET/EW

Original and 4 copies to Department of State.

1 copy to American Embassy, Istanbul.

1 copy to American Legation, Bern, Switzerland.

CHARGE SLIP

File No. 767.68117

Enclosure	Charge to—	Date	Clerk's initials	Remarks
~~869 to 872 874~~	~~NE Barnes~~	~~12-10-35~~	~~LEC~~	
~~884, 886, 887~~	~~Mr. Carr~~	~~12-10-35~~	~~LEC~~	
~~869 to 874~~	~~NE Barnes~~	~~12-10-35~~	~~LEC~~	
~~(except, 872, 873, 874, 875A - Sent to Mr. C.)~~				
~~854C~~	~~NE~~	~~4/27/36~~	~~[illegible]~~	~~W 9 [illegible]~~
854C	NE	5/19/36	[illegible]	W 9 [illegible]
~~850A to 854B~~	NE Alling	5-21-36	LEC	
~~854D to 860~~		"	"	
868	" "			

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1934 1—1433

767.68119/868

Enclosure Omitted on purport book

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TELEGRAM RECEIVED

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
APR 22 1935
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

1—1336

RR

TREATY DIVISION
MAY 8 - 1935
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

FROM

GRAY

Geneva (Part Air)

Dated April 17, 1935.

Recd. 19, 6:29 a. m.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
RECEIVED
APR 19 1935
DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS

Secretary of State,

Washington.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
APR 19 1935
DIVISION OF
WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

147, April 17, 6 p. m.

Consulate's despatch 956, political, July 12th last.

FILED
MAY 8 1935

One. After discussing the resolution relating to German rearmament the Turkish representation in the Council meeting today made a statement in regard to Turkey's attitude towards the Straits Convention of the following substance:

He reminded the Council that the Treaty of Lausanne included clauses limiting the means of defense of one part of Turkey. In Thrace the limitation applied also to Greece and Bulgaria. He would refer therefore only to the Bosphorus concerning which the military clauses were discriminatory in character as they involved no counterpart and thus established an unfair situation to the detriment of Turkey in spite of change in the circumstances that had given rise to them. If changes were envisaged

767.68119/869

in application military systems Turkey would be obliged to make her acceptance depending on a modification of the provisions relating to the Bosphorus and Dardanelles. Under a system of perfect equality Turkey offered full security to all and was ready to accept any agreement that might be desired. He did not wish to go into this question now but desired to make Turkey's attitude clear any changes respecting the straits would not of course affect the freedom thereof.

Two. The representatives of Great Britain, Italy and France in turn immediately expressed reservations on the subject at the same time observing that the question had no direct connection with the matter before them and that it had not been raised formally by the Turkish representative.

Three. Litvinov declared that his country would place no difficulty in the way of the realization of Turkish desires.

Four. The Turkish statement is interpreted here as a forewarning if the future negotiations should include a revision of the military clauses of the Treaties of Saint Germain, Trianon and Neuilly.

763.72119

WSB GILBERT

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

To Mr. Dulles (Geneva) 5/7/35 HSV/LS

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
1935 MAY 4 AM 10 36

DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
MAY 7 - 1935
DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

April 24, 1935.

767.68119/869

767.68119 Straits
Note 711.672

A telegram of April 17, 1935, from the Consulate at Geneva reports that after discussing the League resolution relating to German rearmament, the Turkish representative in the League Council made a statement to the effect that if any changes were envisaged in the application of the present military systems Turkey would be obliged to make her acceptance dependent upon a modification of the Straits Convention, signed as part of the Treaty of Lausanne on July 24, 1923, in so far as the provisions of that Convention related to the demilitarization of the Bosphorus and the Dardenelles. The attitude of Turkey, as thus set forth at Geneva, is that while the limitations imposed by the Lausanne Treaty in respect to Thrace applied also to Greece and Bulgaria, the military clauses in the Straits Convention were discriminatory in character as they involved no counterpart and thus established an unfair situation to the detriment of Turkey in spite of change in the circumstances which had given rise to them. It was made clear that any alterations respecting the Straits would not be considered by Turkey as affecting the freedom thereof.

FILED
MAY 8 1935

The Turkish statement was interpreted at Geneva as a forewarning, in case future rearmament negotiations should include

767.68119/870

include a revision of the Treaties of St. Germain, Trianon and Neuilly. Reservations on the subject were immediately expressed by the representatives of Great Britain, Italy and France, who noted that the matter had not been raised formally by the Turkish representative, but Litvinov in behalf of Soviet Russia declared that his country would place no difficulty in the way of the realization of the Turkish desires.

To understand the present situation with respect to the Straits, and our own position in regard thereto it may be useful to outline briefly the historical background of these strategical waters. After the Turks took possession of Constantinople in 1453 and occupied the territories on either side of the Dardenelles, the Sea of Marmora and the Bosphorus, as well as territories surrounding the Black Sea, the claim that these waters constituted part of the Ottoman dominions seemed indisputable and was for a long time not successfully contested. Such freedom of navigation therein as Turkey conceded to foreign powers was accepted as a matter rather of privilege than of right. Apparently the first such concession was to France, in 1535, when Turkey by treaty granted to French subjects the privilege of navigation, for commercial purposes, in Ottoman waters. There followed a great many other treaties granting similar privileges to various other European nations, including a

treaty

treaty of 1798 with Russia which accorded the latter the right to sail her warships through the Straits. Under the most-favored-nation clause of the American-Turkish Treaty of 1830, our own merchant ships enjoyed practically the same privileges of navigation in the Straits and the Black Sea as those of other nations.

In 1841 the first Straits Convention was signed at London by Great Britain, Austria, France, Prussia, Russia and Turkey, under which the exclusion of foreign warships from the Straits in time of peace became an accepted rule of European international law.

By the Treaty of Paris, signed at the conclusion of the Crimean War in 1856, the provisions of the Treaty of 1841 were not only reaffirmed, but the Black Sea was declared neutralized, and, with minor reservations, its waters closed in perpetuity to warships of all powers. A separate convention was signed at the same time between Russia and Turkey fixing the number and size of light vessels to be maintained by them in the Black Sea, but this was abrogated in 1871, at the same time that the Treaty of London of that date authorized the Sultan to open the Straits in time of peace to the warships of friendly and allied powers when, "in his opinion", necessary to ensure execution of the stipulations maintained in the Treaty of Paris of 1856. The Treaty of London was the last international act regulating the legal position of the Bosphorus and the Dardenelles up to the date of the

World War of 1914-18, and, despite occasional misunderstandings, evasions and even violations, was considered as such to be incorporated in the public law of Europe of that period.

Under the Allied Treaty of Lausanne signed on July 24, 1923, the Convention relating to the "Régime of the Straits" became effective. This Convention, ratified by Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, France and Rumania, assured freedom of navigation through the Straits to all vessels and set up an International Commission to carry out the provisions of the Convention under the auspices of the League of Nations. Although the door was left open for American representation on the Commission, the United States, which did not sign the Allied Treaty of Lausanne, for various reasons did not desire to adhere to the Straits Convention; Russia and Yugoslavia signed the Convention but failed to ratify. By this Convention the waters of the Straits were internationalized and both shores of the Straits of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus were demilitarized over a certain zone. In addition, from the Aegean Sea to the Black Sea the territories extending on both sides of the frontiers separating Turkey from Bulgaria and from Greece were demilitarized to a depth of about 30 km.

The advantages which would accrue to Turkey by overthrowing the military clauses relating to the Straits and thus establishing herself as sole guardian of that area are clear enough. For one thing, the benefits now conferred upon international trade and shipping under the rules for complete

freedom

freedom of navigation without charges would revert to Turkey were she to regain control; but from the political and military standpoint the advantages are even more obvious. Turkey has a close understanding, if not a secret military alliance, with Soviet Russia and the latter is only too glad to have a friend standing guard over the Straits, thus permitting her a certain freedom to pursue her policies elsewhere. The Russians have consistently supported the Turks on the question of rearmament ~~and~~ the Straits since it was first raised about a year ago, and it is reliably reported that they have guaranteed full assistance to Turkey in the defense of the Dardenelles. The close liaison known to exist between Turkey and Russia may be expected to result in continued cooperation on this matter.

Whether the present Straits Convention would be of actual validity in the event Turkey were drawn into war is perhaps doubtful. Despite the provisions of the Convention, it is altogether probable that in an emergency Turkey would not hesitate to close the Straits by laying mines and by bringing heavy artillery into demilitarized zones. Indeed, it is believed that she may already have prepared herself along these lines -- not by permanent fortifications, but by purchasing a supply of mines from Russia, by setting up mobile defenses just outside the prohibited zones and by constructing a light railway for bringing up big guns.

As to the position of this Government with respect to

the

the Straits, a consultation between the Department and the Navy Department in 1923 resulted in an article being inserted in the American-Turkish Treaty signed at Lausanne on August 6, 1923, to obtain certain of the benefits and privileges provided for in the Straits Convention, but the American-Turkish Treaty failed to obtain the consent of the Senate to ratification. However, an exchange of notes on February 17, 1927, between the United States and Turkey provided that pending the entrance into effect of a consular convention and a convention of establishment and residence between the two countries "the essential provisions of the Turkish-American Treaty signed at Lausanne on August 6, 1923, and its annexes, should constitute the basis for the treatment of American nationals", and the Department has always considered that we could invoke the provisions of this exchange of notes in the event that any question arose regarding the right of American vessels and aircraft to navigate the Straits. The provisions of this exchange of notes would, of course, be void as soon as we negotiate a consular convention with Turkey.

Note 711.672 Straits

The Navy Department at present feels that we should negotiate a separate Straits Convention with Turkey which we could invoke in case our rights in the Straits are actually threatened. However, since the Allied Straits Convention of 1923 provides for "complete freedom of navigation and passage by day and by night under any flag", it would appear that

even

even though we are not a party to that Convention, the above-mentioned provision might be invoked by us in case of need. Owing to the element of doubt in the latter connection, however, and in view of the Navy's attitude in the matter, we requested the Embassy at Istanbul as long ago as July 28, 1931, to set forth its views as to the desirability of concluding a separate treaty with Turkey regarding the rights of American vessels and aircraft, both commercial and naval, to navigate the Straits, but possibly because in previous informal correspondence Ambassador Grew had expressed the opinion that under existing conditions we were sufficiently protected and that it would be unwise to broach the subject to the Turks at that time, no reply was received from the Embassy.

On June 29, 1934, the Department invited the attention of Ambassador Skinner to its instruction of July 28, 1931, and requested an expression of his views as to the desirability of now proposing to the Turkish Government the negotiation of an agreement covering the rights of the United States in the navigation of the Straits. Mr. Skinner, however, furnished us with very little information on which to base an opinion as to whether the Turks would be receptive to a proposal on our part to negotiate such an agreement. Although we again requested the Ambassador, in an instruction of September 10, 1934, to let us have the benefit of his

comments

comments or suggestions on the subject, particularly in regard to the question as to whether the Turkish Government, at a time when it was presumably giving consideration to the abrogation of the Straits Convention signed in 1923, would be willing to confirm and renew by means of a separate treaty with the United States the pertinent provisions of that Convention, about all we received from him was the report of a casual statement made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the effect that "Turkey would be delighted to negotiate a separate Straits Convention with the United States, provided the United States would assume the same responsibilities for the defense of the Straits as the Powers signatory of the Straits Convention". Fortunately, we have had at the Embassy a Counselor eminently qualified to express an opinion on this subject, Mr. G. Howland Shaw, and in personal correspondence and conversations at the Department during the course of his visit to this country early in 1935, he made clear his feeling that, in view of the attitude of the Turks toward the existing Convention and the general inadvisability of attempting to negotiate additional treaties with them at this juncture, the present time was inopportune to approach the Turkish Government on any such topic as a separate Straits Convention. Thus the matter has been allowed to rest as far as the Department is concerned, until a change in circumstances takes place which would encourage us to make a formal proposal to the

Turkish

Turkish Government for the conclusion of an agreement as to our rights of navigation in the Straits.

HSV

HSV/LS

767.68119/870
862.20/967

May 8 1935

Dear Prentiss:

We have been very much interested in the attitude of the Turkish member of the League of Nations Council toward German rearmament as expressed in the meeting at Geneva on April 16, 1935, the Minutes of which were transmitted with your report No. 1240, Political, of April 18, 1935. On page 56 of the Minutes the representative of Turkey made the statement that the Straits Convention contained military clauses of a discriminatory character and that if changes should occur in the existing peace treaties Turkey would be bound to make those changes dependent upon modifications in the military régime of the Straits.

EEE
767.68119/870

We were particularly interested in the reaction of the representatives of the other Powers to the Turkish statement. Whereas it appears that Litvinoff subscribed to the Turkish position and stated bluntly that "this question has been raised", M. Laval averred that "the representative of Turkey did not explicitly raise the problem of the Straits". The Italian representative made even more ambiguous remarks in this

Prentiss B. Gilbert, Esquire,

American Consul,

Geneva, Switzerland.

this connection, referring at one point to "the question which has been raised by the representative of Turkey" and at another taking note of the fact "that this question is not formally raised". What we would like to know is: When is a question considered to be formally raised in a meeting of the League Council and whether on this occasion any distinction can be made in the action of the Turkish member?

In this connection I am enclosing for your strictly confidential information a copy of a memorandum prepared in this Division setting forth certain background material in connection with the question of the Straits Convention. A good part of this material may not be entirely pertinent to the questions arising at Geneva and for obvious reasons it would not be desirable to give it further circulation, but it may serve as a guide to you when the general question of the Straits comes up again. Needless to say, we would be very appreciative of any information you may be able to send us from time to time on the attitude of Turkey in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

Wallace Murray

MAY 7 1935 PM

CR 567

Enclosure:

Memorandum dated April 24, 1935.

HSV

NE HSV/LS

WM/PH 5/7/35 amw

A true copy of the signed original.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
SECRETARY OF STATE
MAY 3 1935
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THE UNDER SECRETARY
APR 29 1935
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
MAY 14 1935
DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
MAY 3 1935
DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

April 29, 1935.

767.68119

Mr. Phillips:

S:

I think you may be interested in glancing over the attached memorandum prepared in this Division regarding the present status of the Straits of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus.

Even prior to the action of Germany in nullifying unilaterally the military clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, the Turkish Government has from time to time intimated that it was dissatisfied with the provisions of the Straits Convention signed as a part of the Treaty of Lausanne on July 24, 1923. The particular provisions of that Convention which the Turkish Government wishes to modify pertain to the demilitarization of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles.

Article X of our Treaty of General Relations of August 6, 1923, with Turkey contained the following respecting the Straits:

> "The commercial vessels and aircraft and the war vessels and aircraft of the United States of America shall enjoy complete liberty of navigation and passage in the Straits of the Dardanelles, the Sea of Marmora, and the Bosphorus, on a basis of equality with similar vessels and aircraft of the most favored foreign nation upon conforming to the rules relative to such navigation and passage established by the Straits Convention signed at Lausanne, July 24, 1923."

This Treaty, as you will recall, failed to obtain the advice and consent of the Senate and hence has never come into force.

At

FW 767.68119/870

At the present time, therefore, we are without any treaty understanding with Turkey respecting the right of free passage for our naval or merchant vessels in the Straits. In case of interference from any quarter with the passage of our vessels through the Straits our only recourse would be to invoke Article 1 of the Straits Convention, which accords merchant vessels and warships of all nations, without any formalities, "complete freedom of navigation and passage by day and by night."

In my opinion we need not be particularly concerned over the efforts of the Turkish Government to modify the Straits Convention. Among the original signatories to the Convention are Great Britain, France, and Italy,-the three Powers vitally concerned in the control of the Straits. We could not of course hope to obtain more favorable treatment in the Straits than the above-mentioned Great Powers. It is unlikely, on the other hand, that Turkey could dictate to those Powers any modification of the Straits régime which would be definitely disadvantageous to the interests of those Powers. Any agreement that is arrived at in this matter between the Great Powers most concerned and Turkey will, without question, be generalized to us and to other naval Powers less concerned.

Our Navy Department has on the other hand at various times recommended that we endeavor to enter into a bilateral arrangement with Turkey respecting our rights in the Straits. For

For reasons set forth in the memorandum, it has not been practicable to carry out the Navy's wishes in this connection.

Wallace Murray.

WSM/GC

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 862.20/996 FOR Despatch #621

FROM Turkey (Skinner) DATED April 22, 1935.

TO NAME 1—1127 ...

REGARDING: Turkey's desire to have a free hand in the Straits if there is to be a relaxation of Treaty requirements. Military precautions have already been taken and the Turks feel entitled to defend Constantinople, but no inclination to hinder the passage of ships of commerce through the Dardanelles.

wth

767.68119/671

1143

No. 621 Istanbul, Turkey, April 22, 1935.

Subject: Reflections after Stresa.

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D.C.

Sir:

The action of the three Powers represented at Stresa, and subsequently the action taken by the Council of the League of Nations at Geneva, are well known, although apparently not much consideration is given to these events except as they relate to Germany. I should like to direct the Department's attention to the attitude of the members of the Petite Entente and the Balkan Entente in this connection, and specifically to the circumstance that both "ententes" seem to be acting as a unit. Thus, after

Stresa,

Stresa, and while at Geneva, representatives of all five Powers met together formally with Mr. Titulescu (Rumania) in the chair. Dr. Aras (Turkey) "exposed the development of the situation" and from this five-Power conference the statement emerges that:

"As regards the revision of military arrangements in States signatory to the treaties of St. Germain, Trianon, and Neuilly, representatives of the five States have taken note of complementary statements made by Mr. Laval, that is to say:

a) The French, British, and Italian Governments have carefully abstained from formulating a definite appreciation which should be made freely by the States most directly interested;

b) The sole recommendation which the three States represented at Stresa thought proper to make tends precisely to set aside any other than a contractual solution, and proposes a procedure based on free negotiations, the possibilities of which should be closely conditioned on new guarantees of security."

This means obviously that the two Ententes propose to make themselves felt in any arrangements tending to the rearmament of Hungary and Bulgaria. It indicates, likewise, that the five southeastern States are not inclined unreservedly to trust their fate to the three Great Powers. But what strikes me particularly is that Turkey, a former ally and co-belligerent of Germany, now takes sides against the German

contention

contention of the right to rearm.

The attitude of Turkey is comprehensible. She is nervous about Bulgaria because, looking through Bulgaria, she sees, or thinks she sees, Italy in the background. Furthermore, she perceives more to be gained by lining up with her present friends than by standing alone. She would like a readjustment of the Straits regime, and any success in that direction would give her an immense amount of satisfaction entirely disproportionate to any benefit of a practical nature which she might realize because it hurts Turkish pride to accept the authority of an international Straits Commission. The continued existence of the Commission reminds her painfully of capitulation days.

Dr. Aras at Geneva already asks that if other Powers are to be granted a relaxation of treaty requirements Turkey be given a free hand in dealing with the Straits. Actually Turkey has already taken her military precautions with regard to the Straits, as the European Powers well know. These precautions, if respectful of the letter of the treaty, are probably considerable, as in these days of mobile armament demilitarized zones count much less than was formerly the case. I discover no inclination in Turkey to circumscribe the passage of ships of commerce through the Dardanelles, but there is a feeling that the Turks are entitled to defend Constantinople, although it is open to some question whether it is not better defended by existing arrangements than it would be if

they

they had a free hand to do what they please.

From conversations which I have had with Dr. Aras before he left for Geneva, and other persons, I gather the impression that Turkey will continue to insist upon her right to defend the narrow waters by such military measures as she deems best suited, and her aimable willingness to act with the other European Powers is based to some extent upon her hope that she will not retire empty handed from current discussions of peace and war.

Respectfully yours,

Robert P. Skinner.

RPS:lr

710

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 631 Istanbul, Turkey, April 30, 1935.

Subject: Turkey and the Straits Convention.

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To the Field
In U. S. A.

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A-C/C
MAY 27 1935
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
MAY 29 1935
DIVISION OF
WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
MAY 27 1935
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

767.68119/872

767.68119

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D.C.

Sir:

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JUN 3 - 1935

À propos of the Turkish request for a reconsideration of the Convention relating to the regime of the Straits recently laid before the Council of the League of Nations by Dr. Tevfik Rüstü Aras, President of the Council and Turkish Foreign Minister, I am told that when Dr. Aras returned to Turkey a day or two ago and encountered the French Ambassador, he brought up the matter, saying that he wished to see him in order to remark that during the session of the Council Turkey had supported the French position with respect to Germany (notwithstanding that Turkey had been Germany's ally during the Great War) and he therefore hoped (and

I

I surmise that he added - expected -) that France would recognize the debt by agreeing to the Turkish demand.

As I may have remarked in an earlier despatch, Turkey particularly dislikes the Straits Commission provided for in Article 10 of the Straits Convention, not so much because of anything it has done or can do, as because of its reminder that the narrow waters, after all, are under a sort of foreign tutelage. It may be remarked in this connection that Article 12 of the Convention states: "The United States of America, in the event of their acceding to the present Convention, will also be entitled to have one representative on the Commission."

I am inclined to surmise that this Straits Convention matter will be kept before the Powers by Turkey until the proposals are definitely accepted.

Respectfully yours,

Robert P. Skinner.

RPS:lr

720/880

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 644 Istanbul, Turkey, May 18, 1935.

Subject: The Straits Convention.

DIVISION OF EASTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
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JUN 8 - 1935
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767.68119/873

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JUN 19 1935

767.68119

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington, D.C.

Sir:

The Department has noted, no doubt, my recent despatches in regard to the Turkish request for a modification of the Straits Convention. Turkish pride is involved in this matter and her Government regard this a favorable moment for pressing the demand. At the recent Balkan Conference held in Bucharest the members of the Entente agreed to support the Turkish view, and the Powers, having received Turkish assistance at Geneva are doubtless giving the subject earnest consideration.

It should not be overlooked that when the Straits

Convention

Convention was being negotiated at Lausanne, it was Ismet Pasha, himself, who recommended it, and that, too, against the wishes of Mr. Chitcherin, the Soviet representative. Mr. Chitcherin was extremely indignant at the attitude of his Turkish friends. But times have changed!

At Lausanne disarmament was in the air,and today, so Turkey says, she then thought disarmament really would take place. Today (I quote a Foreign Office official) Turkey cannot ignore that the world is arming. The Straits are Turkey's most vulnerable point. My informant supplies the interesting fact that when recently Great Britain opposed the re-arming of the Straits, Dr. Aras replied that Turkey would willingly refrain from re-arming the Straits if the British would sign a treaty agreeing to protect them. That, in fact, was about what he said to me when we once talked about a treaty with the United States - putting it this way: "Yes, a treaty with the United States if you would agree to join us in protective measures."

With or without treaty revision, Turkey is already prepared to defend the Straits, and it is open to doubt whether, questions of pride and prestige apart, Turkey has much to gain from revision. Mobile land defenses exist, and, I am told, there are numerous craft in readiness,in Ismet Bay in the Marmara, to be towed where needed, and utilized to close the channel. Doubtless the Soviets are urging Turkey to obtain now what Mr. Chitcherin could not get in 1923.

Respectfully yours,

Robert P. Skinner.

RPS:lr
720/880

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 653 Istanbul, Turkey, May 29, 1935.

Subject: Control of the Straits.

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JUN 25 1935
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JUN 25 1935

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
JUN 21 1935
DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

767.68119/874

767.68119

FILED
JUN 22

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D.C.

Sir:

In continuation of recent despatches which I have sent to the Department in regard to the Turkish desire for a revision of the Straits Convention, I have to report that in the course of my inspection journey to Izmir, concluded only a few days ago, I passed over the road from Chanakele very near the mouth of the Straits to the site of ancient Troy, during two-thirds of the way on the main military road which connects with the railway. This road has a hard surface and is now being rebridged in about eight different places where I was obliged to make

detours,

detours, the bridges at the moment being down. According to my inexpert observation, these bridges are being renewed with much stronger structures than those they are intended to replace. Furthermore, a military encampment actually at the mouth of the Straits on the Asiatic shore was pointed out to me, this encampment having been set up within the preceding ten days. It was said that the General in command had about 250 men under him, and the presumption seemed to be either that they were engineers making studies for permanent fortifications or perhaps were actually engaged in erecting fortifications. It would be unfair to the Turkish Government to assume that it proposes to imitate the German example and confront the parties to the Straits Convention with a "fait accompli", but I should say that it was clearly the case that the military authorities are taking the most active preparatory steps to the end in view.

My British colleague takes a reasonable view of the Straits problem. On the military side he recognizes that mobile artillery rather than permanent fortifications is the essential thing, but nevertheless mobile artillery requires gun emplacements and these emplacements could not at present be built in the demilitarized zone. Dr. Aras, our Minister of Foreign Affairs, had told him that his proposals at Geneva were not intended in any sense as an ultimatum but merely as the raising of a question of interest to Turkey. The British habit was, when something or

other

other was working reasonably well, to let it alone and not make any change without the clearest sort of reason for so doing, and apparently London is now awaiting satisfactory proof that a change would be for the better and, of course, an international agreement would not be changed unilaterally.

Sir Percy Loraine agrees with the view that I have put forward heretofore that the Turkish Government looks upon the demilitarized zones as a blot upon Turkish independence. He himself had the impression that the Soviets were back of the Turks in this matter, especially as the Soviet Ambassador had asked him some days ago how the British Government felt on the subject.

761.67

I sometimes wonder whether the Turks are not getting into deeper water with the Russians than they know, or had any intention of getting. The Russians now seem to be moving in the direction which had Mr. Chicherin's approval when the Lausanne Treaty was under negotiation. The Russians, after all, do not change. In the days of the Tsar their eyes were constantly fixed upon Constantinople. The new Tsar, Stalin, works in a different way. He makes a military alliance with Turkey; he becomes indispensable to Turkey, or so believes; he encourages the fortification of the Straits; he endows Turkey with certain industries; he obtains a privileged position, generally, in this country. How far will this movement proceed, and what would happen if the strong and able leader of Turkey

today

today should disappear as some time he must, leaving the Government in the hands of men of untested ability who might or might not agree among themselves? In such circumstances would not Russia command the situation?

It would be extremely interesting to return to this country twenty-five years hence and institute comparisons.

Respectfully yours,

Robert P. Skinner.

RPS:lr

728/880

PBG/IS
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AMERICAN CONSULAR SERVICE

Geneva, Switzerland, June 5, 1935

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JUN 21 1935
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file
see letter 9/14/35

767.68119/875

Wallace Murray, Esquire,
Chief, Division of Near Eastern Affairs,
Department of State,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Wallace:

I have your letter of May 8/8.70 in which you discuss the matter of the régime of the Straits vis-à-vis action at Geneva.

I have read with great care the memorandum which you enclosed with your letter. It is most illuminating in indicating the character of the American policy involved and thus affords us a guide in following any developments of the question here.

The particular aspect of this matter which you raise in your letter concerns the technical status of this question before the League in view of Litvinoff's statement in the April 16, 1935 meeting of the League Council. I wish to say at this point that your letter would have had an earlier answer had it not been that it arrived during the recent May Council when the situation was too strenuous here for me carefully to take up your question.

I have since, however, (naturally not disclosing that the Department had addressed me any inquiry on this subject) taken occasion to discuss your question with the officials of the Secretariat's Legal Section. I too naturally noted during the course of the Council meeting that after the Turkish representative had made

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JUN 21 1935

his declaration respecting the Straits Convention, that Litvinoff stated that "this question has been raised", that the representative of France asserted that "the representative of Turkey did not explicitly raise the problem of the Straits", while other representatives made, as you note in your letter, more ambiguous references. You naturally ask me when a question can be considered to have been formally raised in a League Council meeting. That is a rather general question for which I believe no inclusive or exclusive definition could be formulated. Likewise, regarding the case which we are considering, it would appear that no absolutely definite answer can be given. It naturally depends on what one means by a question's being "raised." This may appear like bagging the question, but still that is not exactly the case. The situation is analogous to that which obtains in our own Congress. If a matter be on the agenda of the League Council there is of course no question at all but that it is juridically "raised." In proceedings under an item on the agenda, the representative of a state may, however, bring forward a matter which he regards as germane to the question in hand or he may bring it forward as an analogy. At that time, or particularly if a discussion ensues, it is the function of the President of the Council to determine whether or not the matter thus brought forward is in order, i. e. whether it be pertinent to the item on the agenda which the Council is considering. Just as in our Senate, however, where our Senators represent sovereign states, a great deal of latitude is often allowed in such matters. In the first place, it may be a close point to determine whether a question be in order or not. In the second place, there are naturally preoccupations of possibly giving offence to a representative of a sovereign state. I may add that in this particular case the question of whether the matter was in order or not was obviously somewhat complicated by the circumstance that the Turkish representative who brought it forward was himself at the time President of the Council.

The opinion of the legal people at the League is that from a technical point of view the word "raised" was employed loosely by the various speakers. They state that "mention" would probably have been more correct. This does not of course preclude the idea that the word "raised" was used for emphasis for political reasons. In any event, I feel that it may be said that the Turkish representative seized an opportunity to make public in a more or less formal manner the Turkish position and that this was followed by Russia's making its position clear and also by the representatives of Great Britain, France, and Italy to express their positions at least by implication. It may well also give Turkey a peg upon which to hang some more formal future action.

I do not feel that I can elucidate this matter any more clearly. If, nevertheless, there be any point respecting this on which you would like to have me make further inquiries, please do not fail to let me know.

Very sincerely yours,

Prentiss Gilbert

July 3 1935

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

I have received your letter of June 14, 1935, in which you indicate the despatches recently sent to the Department on the subject of the Straits and the possible refortification by Turkey of that area. While the last three despatches mentioned by you had not arrived at the time I wrote my letter of May 16, I do not see that their contents alter the general observations I made on the matter of reporting in full concerning this very interesting and important topic.

It is true, of course, that you have given us from time to time certain comments on the Straits problem which have contributed to our knowledge of the situation, but what I had in mind was, more particularly, a comprehensive report dealing at length with the situation from every angle. For example, although you have discussed cursorily with Sir Percy Lorraine the question of the demilitarized zones, it would be even more helpful from the Department's point of view to have a symposium of opinions on the subject from those of your colleagues most directly concerned, such as the French, Soviet,

The Honorable
Robert P.Skinner,
American Ambassador,
Istanbul, Turkey.

767.68119/875A

Soviet, German, Italian, as well as of course the British, Ambassador.

Again, the views of the Military Attaché would be valuable; I notice in one of the reports on the meeting of commissioned officers in Istanbul that several very pertinent questions were raised regarding the Straits and their vulnerability to attack in modern warfare, but that discussion thereof was deferred until Colonel Crane's return. If the latter would contribute his opinion of current developments to any detailed study that the Embassy might make I am sure that it would be greatly appreciated here.

I may add that the Department could hardly reach a decision on the question of negotiating a separate Straits Convention with Turkey on the basis of your despatch No. 411 of October 29, 1934, which reported the "purely informal" and "casual" conversation which you had with the Foreign Minister. Such a conversation was not in any case envisaged by the Department, which in its No. 119 of September 10, 1934, asked for an expression of your own views on the matter of a treaty and intended to take them into careful consideration before authorizing you to sound out the Turkish authorities in any way, formally or informally. As of course you know, the Navy Department is especially interested in this angle of the problem, and since it maintains no naval attaché in Turkey it relies for its information on what-

ever

ever we may transmit. I think you will agree that such a brief treatment of the desirability of approaching the Turkish Government on the negotiation of an agreement would scarcely afford the Navy adequate material to make a serious study of the subject.

Sincerely yours,

Wallace Murray

JUL 8 1935

A true copy of the signed original

NE HSV/LS

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

767.68119/876

SEE 127.68 Conferences, Istanbul/24 FOR letter

FROM (Skinner) DATED May 16, 1935
NAME

TO Turkey

1—1127

REGARDING:

Demilitarization of the Straits and the attitude of Turkey with respect to a revision of the military clauses of the Straits Convention: report regarding same desired.

wb

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Ankara, June 26, 1935.

No. 688

DIVISION OF EASTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS AUG 7 - 1935 DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE AUG 5 1935 DIVISION OF WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: Conversation on Current Questions with the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

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DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS

FOR DISTRIBUTION Yes No
To the field
In U. S. A.
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MID } (strictly confidential)

JUL 30 1935

DEPARTMENT OF STATE JUL 22 1935 DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

Division of FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS AUG 8 1935

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A-C/C JUL 25 1935 ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

I called on Dr. Tevfik Rüştü Aras, Minister for Foreign Affairs, yesterday, with whom I had a protracted conversation in regard to various political questions. It will be recalled that as a member of the Council of the League of Nations and until recently its President, he has had many opportunities to be in touch with European political leaders. Referring to the question of the defense of the Straits he said that the question was now open for discussion, that the powers interested were aware of Turkey's desires, but up to the present time no formal demand for a decision had been advanced. That would come later. From the members of the Balkan Union he had been promised the most definite support

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FILED AUG 10 1935

support and he had high hopes that although Great Britain and France may be somewhat slow to come over to the Turkish point of view, nevertheless they will do so. The subject was discussed on June 20 at Bucharest where the representatives of the four Balkan States composing the Entente held their last meeting, at which time Dr. Aras obtained from them the promise that they would support the following Turkish demands:

1. The right to install a certain number of mobile coast batteries..

2. The militarization of Turkish territory in Europe through the protection by means of mobile guns of routes leading to the Straits.

3. The right to plant submarine mine carriers on the coast.

4. The right to maintain at Çanakkale two bases for submarines each with a given number of these vessels.

5. The right to maintain a base for hydroplanes and another for airplanes.

The above, Dr. Aras said, comprised definitely the complete Turkish desires respecting the rearmament of the Straits.

I mentioned that at the Lausanne Conference Ismet Pasha had agreed to the present legal position as representing what were then Turkish wishes, that his acceptance of the terms had irritated Mr. Tchitcherin, representative of Russia, and that the present application for the right to rearm, something that Russia, also, seemed to desire still, indicated a complete change in the Turkish point of view. He agreed

that

that this was so and explained it on the ground that Turkey had accepted the Straits Convention which carried with it a guarantee of protection by the signatary powers, because at the time it seemed probable that the disarmament of Germany would be followed by disarmament everywhere; but exactly the reverse situation now prevailed, as every power was arming heavily and Turkey could not be left in her present defenseless position. As to a special treaty with the United States giving us the right of transit under all circumstances, Turkey would be very pleased to negotiate such a treaty but would require us to come to her assistance in case of trouble. I pointed out that we would be most unlikely to accept any commitments of that kind in Europe, and we left the subject there.

711.672. State

The Italian Ambassador had just left Dr. Aras, in consequence of which he was full of the subject of Ethiopia. Turkey was extremely interested in the situation in Africa and he, as President of the Council of the League of Nations, had done his utmost to prevent the outbreak of war. He explained the failure of the League to do anything positive about Ethiopia on the ground that precipitate action would certainly have led to the withdrawal of Italy from the League with a consequent chaotic situation in Europe, and said that in informal session the various members of the Council had pressed the Italian delegate very hard and that he himself had obtained a positive promise of entirely unofficial character that Italy would not go to war with Ethiopia but would submit her claims to some sort of arbitration. Whether Italy could hold back in present circumstances was another question - at all events, she was under moral obligation to do so.

765.84

SD

Dr.

Dr. Aras thought that perhaps, but only perhaps, the extensive military preparations made by Italy were intended for bluffing purposes, the object being to force Great Britain to secure an arrangement under which an Italian railroad might be built from Eritrea to Italian Somaliland, thus uniting the two colonies now separated by the French colony. To the question whether the powers possessed any right whatever to arrange for the construction of a railroad through Ethiopia without Ethiopia's consent, he observed that it might be immoral but also it might enable Italy to save her face. The danger, he avowed, was very great, because there was always Mr. Mussolini who had never made war and whose ambition to be a new Caesar was sufficiently revealed in his public addresses.

884.77

I asked whether he had any information about the allegation that France not only had washed her hands of Ethiopia in order to hold Italy in line in Europe but also had loaned three billion francs to the Italian government. Dr. Aras said that Mr. Laval denied to him that such a loan had been made but that he had obtained from his Ambassador in Paris information that a loan of at least one billion francs had actually been made. He was unable to give any particulars but thought the operation had been arranged through the Bank of France.

865.51
751.65

Ethiopia is now represented in Turkey by a Chargé d'Affaires who seems to be an intelligent young man and he had discussed with Dr. Aras the matter of Turkish military advisers for his country. Dr. Aras said that he had refused this request because Turkish advisers, even though they proceeded to Ethiopia voluntarily, would deprive Turkey of some

884.20

measure

measure of her influence at Geneva when the Ethiopian question next came up for discussion. The Ethiopians seemed to understand this point of view. Dr. Aras made the interesting statement to me that Italy is sounding other members of the League to consent to the expulsion of Ethiopia from that organization on the ground that she was not an organized state and therefore disqualified from membership. Turkey was definitely opposed to any such action and furthermore the League had provided no machinery for the expulsion of any of its members on any such grounds. Ethiopia had been regularly admitted and if there were powers that questioned her qualifications for membership they should have done so before she was in fact admitted. Furthermore there were other members of the League certainly no better organized or more abundantly qualified than Ethiopia which, at all events, was a completely independent power and had maintained its independence for centuries, whereas Irak was of recent creation and doubtful independence and India did not even possess what the British call "dominion status."

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I was interested to receive from Dr. Aras himself confirmation of the statement already made to the Department, that the Greek government during the late revolution applied to Yugoslavia and Turkey for assistance and received the promise of assistance in the way of military equipment. The Turkish government, he said, responded at once to the request of Premier Tsaldaris on the understanding that whatever was furnished should be purchased. As a matter of fact, nothing had been purchased because the insurrection itself had collapsed before anything

MBB

anything could be done. He did not know precisely what the Greeks had desired to acquire. The assistance offered to the Greeks was not based upon any implied obligation arising under the Balkan Entente but was based purely on the ground of friendship. Dr. Aras thought that since the insurrection had been crushed the Greek government had proceeded without moderation and with very little capacity for conciliating the conflicting interests. Turkey had received Greek refugees after the defeat of the rebellion and had urged clemency for Messrs. Papanastassiou, Cafandaris, and others. Furthermore, Turkey, Rumania and Yugoslavia, all three, had joined in advising Greece not to raise the question of the régime for several years. Mr. Maximos, the Greek Foreign Minister, was a very reasonable man and desired to do his utmost to heal the wounds caused by the insurrection but the others were far less manageable. Dr. Aras spoke more generously of Mr. Venizelos than I had expected. He takes the charitable view that Mr. Venizelos did not start the insurrection and probably would have opposed it had he been in a position to do so; he felt that his friends had committed themselves in his absence and when it was too late for them to retreat he was moved by sentiments of loyalty to join with them. It might be a long time before Greece would recover her political equilibrium.

The large and active Chinese mission with a permanently installed Minister Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary now in Turkey has aroused a great deal of sympathetic feeling in Turkish circles. Dr. Aras was obviously flattered in his

feelings

feelings as a Turk that this mission had come out for no other apparent purpose than to ascertain how Turkey had reorganized herself in the short period of eleven years. Dr. Aras has provided his Chinese friends with the secret: he recommends that as they cannot face the Japanese in a military sense they must simply yield to superior force, protesting all the time, and retire into the interior. Let them establish themselves at some definite point, making no effort to keep the whole Chinese Empire together, but organizing such small territory as they can certainly control in the most efficient way and then, as a drop of oil slowly spreads in every direction, so also the Chinese power will spread over the whole of China no matter what the Japanese do or refrain from doing. It may take a very long time but it will work.

893.00

Our conversation terminated in a somewhat bantering tone with a short talk about Russia. I reminded Dr. Aras that Russia after all was a federated socialistic Republic and according to its system of government might take on Turkey some day as a very desirable addition. In a humorous way he denied that the Russian influence was making any headway in the sense of anything more than a good understanding to the advantage of both sides. The Turks were getting a good deal of material assistance from Russia and Russia was getting invaluable support from Turkey, so the accounts were even. There was no likelihood, and in fact no possibility, that the Sovietic principles of government would ever be adopted in Turkey, which was absolutely opposed to them and looked

761.67

looked upon Russia as a foreign government just as she looked upon Germany and Italy as foreign governments, domestic systems not being matters with respect to which Turkey felt she had any concern whatever.

The Prime Minister and Dr. Aras are leaving today or tomorrow on a holiday trip to Van and other cities in Eastern Turkey. At least it is described as a strictly holiday excursion.

Respectfully yours,

Robert P. Skinner.

710
RPS/rs

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Copy to Navy + War 7/24/35 NE-HSV/GC

Istanbul, Turkey, July 3, 1935.

No. 695

Ans'd. 9/9/35 NE-RAH/PTFA/GS.

Subject: Turkey's Attitude towards the Straits Convention.

July 26 1935

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1935 JUL 20 AM 11 41
DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS
AND RECORDS

767.68119/878

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D.C.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
USV RAH
JUL 22 1935
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
A-C/C
JUL 29 1935
ASSISTANT SECRETARY
OF STATE

Sir:

At the extraordinary session of the Council of the League of Nations of April 15-17, 1935, Dr. Aras proclaimed the Turkish Government's belief that the demilitarized zones in Turkey are not in harmony with the military preparations threatened in Europe and that should there be a change in the situation established by existing treaties Turkey would be obliged to take appropriate measures for the defence of the Straits. The Powers were not receptive and emphatically reminded Dr. Aras that the matter was not on the agenda of that particular meeting of the League Council. This is not the first time that Turkey's

vivacious

vivacious and peripatetic Foreign Minister has expressed such views. Early in May 1934, he told the Counselor of the British Embassy that he was going to Geneva and if, as he fully expected, it became clear that the Powers would do nothing in the way of disarming he proposed to announce Turkey's intention of fortifying the Straits and doing away with the demilitarized zones. At about the same time the Minister spoke in similar terms to the French Ambassador who became somewhat agitated and sent an eleven-page telegram to his Government. The British Admiralty was also understood to have been upset upon hearing of Dr. Aras' remarks. Before actually leaving for Geneva in May, 1934, however, Dr. Aras spoke more reassuringly, but it was evident that his first statements reflected a thought which was developing in the minds of the Turkish leaders. In the past year this thought has been consolidated. The military temper and preparations in Europe have become more marked and in particular Turkey's fear of Italy has been given far more point by the latter's war preparations against Ethiopia. It is not surprising, therefore, that Dr. Aras has again talked at Geneva about the Straits and that the matter was considered at the May and June meetings of the Balkan Entente at Bucarest. On June 25th, Dr. Aras told me that everything that had been said by Turkey on this subject up to the present time was in the nature of exploration and that as yet Turkey's ideas had not been put in writing.

What are the causes of Turkey's desire to abolish

the

the demilitarized zones and fortify the Straits? First and foremost should be mentioned the profound impression that the re-arming of Europe has made in Ankara. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at Ankara there is and has been for many months a conviction that when Germany has completed her military preparations there will be war in Europe, and that the possibility of war even sooner as a result of some assassination or other untoward incident is by no means to be excluded. The Turks point out that when they signed the Straits Convention on July 24, 1923, there appeared to be reason to believe that disarmament would be general and seriously carried out. Precisely the contrary has proved to be the reality. In other words, they picture the demilitarization provisions of the Straits Convention as essentially part of a general disarmament movement which has not been carried out. The contention that the Straits Convention was imposed on Turkey, as the Treaty of Versailles was imposed on Germany, is not put forward by Turkey. They state that the Convention embodies what they themselves wanted in 1923. They are perfectly aware of the contrast between the atmosphere of the Paris Conference in 1919 and that of the Lausanne Conference four years later. The circumstances under which the Straits Convention was negotiated are generally known and any failing memory could easily be supplemented by the Lausanne Procès-Verbaux. What is really worrying the Turks is the defence of their territory first against Italian aggression, whether with or without Bulgarian support, and second, against the many unforeseeable threats which might arise from or in

connection

connection with a general European conflict. As previously stated the first of these dangers seems to the Turks more real every day as the Italian aggression against Ethiopia becomes more crudely obvious and the second, if more remote, is hardly less tangible. As for the protection of the Straits, provided for in Article 18 of the Straits Convention, with the examples of Corfu, China and now Ethiopia in mind, the Turks may perhaps be pardoned for preferring to rely upon their own military preparations rather than upon the quite unpredictable activities of Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan as agents of the Council of the League of Nations.

In putting forward the consideration of defence as the first reason of Turkey's attitude on the Straits question, I am not excluding other reasons. Turkey's feeling of prestige may be involved and demilitarization of certain Turkish territory by an international agreement may have come to be thought of as humiliating. It is true that from the outset Turkey has done everything possible to minimize the importance of the Straits Commission set up under the Convention, just as the Judicial Advisors provided for in the Lausanne settlement were assisted along the path of a pleasant but innocuous existence. But the importance of the prestige factor can be overemphasized.

It has been said that the Straits Convention does not prevent Turkey from defending the Straits. This statement cannot be accepted without reservation. It is true that with the present disposition of her armed forces just outside the demilitarized zones Turkish troops could

could reach the Straits within three or four hours and heavy mobile artillery could be placed in position probably within twelve hours. The question at issue is not between a defence of the Straits and no defence at all, but between a more effective and a less effective defence. The point will become clearer if the present disposition of Turkish forces near the Dardanelles and in Thrace is studied with the help of a map showing the demilitarized zones. That disposition, according to the Military Attaché, is as follows:

Note
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In the Dardanelles Area (Headquarters at Balikesir):

4th Division (at Edremid)	6000
11th Division (at Bursa)	6000
66th Straits Brigade (Ezine)	2000
2nd Mountain Brigade (Darica)	2000

In addition to the foregoing, there are 3000 gendarmes in the Çanak area - the equivalent of three picked regiments. Excluding the division at Bursa as being too far away, Turkey is now therefore in a position to place 13,000 men on the Çanak side of the Straits in a few hours time.

In Thrace:

3rd Corps at Çorlu 61st Division at Tekirdag	10000
(Troops at Çorlu, Tekirdag, Malkare and Kesan).	
Division at Lule Burgas	10000
(Troops at Vize, Lule Burgas and Baba Eski).	
Cavalry Division at Kirklareli	6000
Zone troops at Çatalca	6000

To the

To the foregoing should be added the 1st Division at Istanbul and the 23rd Division at Ismit, each of 10,000 men.

It is significant that today two-thirds of the Turkish army is stationed at points west of Ankara, whereas a year ago the same proportion was stationed east of the capital. With the settlement of all questions at issue with Persia and the transfer of many Kurds to the west and south-west, the situation in the eastern vilayets has greatly changed. But more important than all else is Turkey's evident conviction that she has nothing to fear from the Soviets. Are we not justified in the view that this conviction was fully consolidated by the visit of Voroshiloff, Budeny and Soviet staff officers to Turkey in October and November 1933? It will be recalled that these two distinguished Soviet soldiers under the guidance of Turkish military leaders visited Izmir, Balikesir and the Straits region generally. It was shortly after this visit that the first Soviet mines began to arrive in Turkey.

The Turkish navy, as a whole, is hardly to be considered as an efficient fighting force. It has been found impossible to provide the kind of man needed for the yeoman class with the result that much of the work of warrant officers has to be handled by commissioned officers. The gunnery has been poor and the commanders of the new destroyers built in Italy have never felt sufficiently sure of themselves to hold full power trials. To the generalization as to inefficiency of the Turkish navy there is one important exception. The submarine

service

867.30

service is first rate. It has been built up by a former German U.-Boat Commander. There are seven submarines of modern design and a submarine base in Artaki Bay. This force would play an important part in the defence of the Straits.

If the demilitarized zones were abolished what steps would the Turkish military leaders take to put the Straits in a better state of defence? The local press has recently furnished some information in this connection in reporting the approval of the Balkan Entente of certain specific requests of the Turkish Government. That the approval of the Balkan Entente actually was given at the Bucarest meeting of June 20th, and that the requests as set forth in the press, while somewhat vague, nevertheless represent the Turkish position as it has so far been formulated, was confirmed to me by Dr. Aras on June 25th. The requests are the following:

1. The installation of a certain number of mobile artillery units.

2. The protection by mobile artillery of certain roads leading to the Dardanelles.

3. The installation of torpedo tubes along the shore.

4. The establishment at Çanakkale of two submarine bases with a certain number of submarines.

5. An aviation base and a base for hydroaeroplanes, presumably somewhere along the Straits.

With the possible exception of point 4 these requests cover approximately the field which any military observer might have anticipated. Presumably the forces now distributed between Balikesir and the neutral zone would be

established

established in permanent barracks nearer the Straits; presumably also manoeuvres and target practice would be carried out reproducing as closely as possible the conditions of an enemy attack upon the Straits. In short, Turkey's ability to defend the Straits would be increased to an appreciable degree.

There have appeared in the press and elsewhere many statements to the general effect that Turkey has already violated the demilitarization provisions of the Straits Convention. There is no proof to warrant such statements and in the opinion of the foreign Military Attachés in Turkey they are false.

Turning now from the military to the political side, we are immediately confronted by a somewhat confused picture. Several months ago at Geneva Dr. Aras expressed a willingness to drop the matter of rearming the Straits if England would furnish a guarantee to protect the Straits in case of need. It is not entirely clear whether Dr. Aras had in mind that England would act alone or as the signatory of a Mediterranean pact which would include other Mediterranean countries, presumably Italy and France. Unless some one Power were clearly to assume responsibility for protecting the Straits in case of need it is not altogether clear what Turkey would secure that she has not already in large measure got under Article 18 of the Straits Convention. At any rate it is a fact that the British Government was not receptive to Dr. Aras' suggestion, on the theory apparently that they already had quite enough responsibilities in the international field. However, there is reason to believe that if Turkey should

work

work out some kind of Mediterranean pact the British would be prepared to approve it publicly and thus give it a certain amount of moral support. Naturally, the British are sensitive to anything affecting the Straits. A traditional attitude and a number of sore points are involved. Furthermore, the British, as Sir Percy Loraine recently told me, are fearful lest if the Turks are allowed to do away with the demilitarized zones, the Germans will raise the question of the demilitarization of the Rhineland and thus challenge not only the Versailles Treaty but the Locarno Pact as well. Presumably, the French have this possibility also in mind, although their attitude on the Straits question has been up to the present somewhat ambiguous. The Soviets are said to have been energetically pushing the Turks in the matter of doing away with the demilitarized zones and the Balkan Entente - Greece, Yugoslavia and Rumania - is also well disposed to the Turkish point of view.

Any change in the regime of the Straits is naturally of great interest to European diplomacy. Old sore points and new diplomatic combinations are very much affected. From the American point of view these are not matters with which we are directly concerned, although in so far as the rearming of the Straits is a phase of the rearming of Europe in general, we cannot but deplore it as a step in the wrong direction. It is hard to see, however, that we can do anything effective about it since Turkey can be influenced only by Powers willing to give some sort of undertaking to take military measures or at least to bring effective political pressure to bear. Our more tangible interest is in the freedom of navigation of the Straits. For

the

the past eleven years even without any provision specifically applying to us the benefits of the Straits Convention, our shipping has received precisely as favorable a treatment as that of any other country. Should the demilitarized zones be abolished and Turkey take over unrestricted control of the Straits, I do not believe that freedom of navigation would in any way be affected in time of peace. In this respect at least, it would clearly not be in Turkey's interest to establish any regime less generous than that provided in the Straits Convention. In time of war, whether Turkey should be a neutral or a belligerent, we are perhaps justified in believing that a Turkey in unrestricted control of the Straits might not accord the same degree of liberty of navigation as that which is set forth in the Straits Convention. On the other hand, it is but fair to point out that the Straits Convention has not been tested out under war conditions, and that even under its terms Turkey, as a belligerent, is given "full power to take such measures as she may consider necessary to prevent enemy vessels from using the Straits", although these measures "are not to be of such a nature as to prevent the free passage of neutral vessels". Article 9 of the Convention is also interesting in this connection. What these provisions might be made to mean in practice we do not know.

From my recent talk with Dr. Aras it is clear that no sudden action will be taken by Turkey in the matter of arming the Straits. There will doubtless be conversations and negotiations. If, however, Turkey persists in her desire to do away with the demilitarized zones, it

seems

seems to me the obvious course for the Powers to follow would be to endeavor to draw as sharp a distinction as possible between the provisions of the Straits Convention having to do with demilitarization and those which deal with freedom of navigation. A serious effort should be made to induce the Turks to incorporate these latter provisions in a new multi-lateral treaty. I feel confident that the Turks would be entirely receptive to such an idea. In fact, Dr. Aras declared before the meeting of the Council at Geneva last April that such changes as Turkey might have to take to protect the Straits would not affect the freedom of the Straits in any way. The question before us Americans, therefore, will probably be something like this: are the demilitarized zones and the International Commission essential to the freedom of navigation of the Straits, or can the principle be satisfactorily safeguarded in other ways?

Respectfully yours,

Robert P. Skinner

Robert P. Skinner.

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July 26 1935

In reply refer to
NE 767.68119/878

767.68119/878

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

The Secretary of State presents his compliments to the Honorable the Secretary of War and transmits as of possible interest a copy of a strictly confidential despatch of July 3, 1935, from the Embassy at Istanbul in regard to the attitude of the Turkish Government toward the Straits Convention signed at Lausanne on July 24, 1923.

Enclosure:
From Istanbul, Turkey,
No. 695, July 3, 1935.

HSV

NE HSV/GC

JUL 25 CR 1935

A true copy of the signed original.

July 26 1935

In reply refer to
NE 767.68119/878

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

My dear Mr. Secretary:

I desire to refer to correspondence exchanged in 1931 between this Department and the Navy Department in regard to the necessity or desirability of safeguarding by means of a formal treaty with Turkey the rights of American vessels in the Straits of the Dardanelles. In this connection I am enclosing a copy of a strictly confidential despatch of July 3, 1935, from the Embassy at Istanbul on the general subject of the Turkish Government's attitude towards the Straits Convention signed at Lausanne on July 24, 1923.

This Department would be glad to receive, in the light of the contents of the Embassy's present despatch, any comments or observations which the Navy Department may care to make on the question of freedom of navigation of the Straits by American commercial vessels and aircraft and war vessels and aircraft.

Sincerely yours,

William Phillips

Acting Secretary

Enclosure:
From Istanbul, Turkey,
No. 695, July 3,1935.

The Honorable
Claude A. Swanson,
Secretary of the Navy.

NE HSV/GC

A true copy of the signed original.

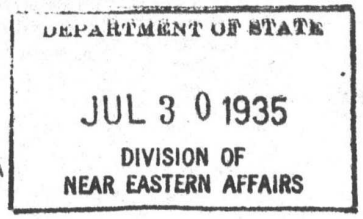
767.68119/878

See 711.672- Straits

JUL 29 1935

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Istanbul, Turkey,
July 18, 1935.



Dear Mr. Murray:

I have just received 875A your letter of July 3, 1935, in regard to the Straits matter. By now you, on your side, will have received my No. 695, dated also July 3rd, which sets forth at some length Turkey's attitude on this subject. I am also sending on today or tomorrow another shorter despatch containing nothing much of importance, but conveying certain impressions derived from my French and British colleagues.

Sincerely yours,

Robert P. Skinner.

Wallace Murray, Esquire,
Chief, Division of Near Eastern Affairs,
Department of State,
Washington, D.C.

767.68119/879

FILED
JUL 30 1935

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

767.68119/880

SEE 811.91267/34 FOR #686

FROM Turkey (Skinner) DATED June 21, 1935

TO

NAME

1—1127

REGARDING: Statement of the President of Turkey concerning fortification of the Straits in an interview with Gladys Baker, American.

Wi

No. 686 Istanbul, Turkey, June 21, 1935.

Subject: The President of the Republic and Miss Gladys Baker.

811.1126/34

The Honorable,

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D.C.

Sir:

767.6811

With reference to my No. 654 of May 29, 1935, in regard to the unusual attentions paid to Miss Gladys Baker, an American press representative, by the President of the Republic, I now have the honor

1/ to complete the record by enclosing a translation from the French of Miss Baker's interview with the President as published today in the newspapers of Istanbul. It is interesting to remember that Miss Baker's notes were submitted to the President and were carefully gone over before they were returned to her. Furthermore, the interview would not have been

been published in Turkey without the approbation of the highest authority.

It will be observed that in the opinion of Mr. Kamal Atatürk it will be impossible for the United States to preserve its neutrality in the event of another great war. With respect to the fortification of the Straits, Mr. Kamal Atatürk remarks that a possession as important as the Straits could not be left to the mercy of an audacious aggressor, and finally Turkey was forced to prevent the passage of the Straits by perturbators of peace who wish to make war.

On the whole, the interview is just a little disappointing considering the special opportunities which the young lady interviewer enjoyed.

Respectfully yours,

Robert P. Skinner.

Enclosure:

1. "An Interview with Atatürk." (JOURNAL D'ORIENT, Istanbul, June 21, 1935).

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Enclosure No. 1 to Despatch No. 686

of June 21, 1935, from the Embassy at Istanbul.

SOURCE: JOURNAL D'ORIENT, No.3871, June 21, 1935, Istanbul.

TRANSLATION

AN INTERVIEW WITH ATATÜRK.

"I WANT TO GOVERN NOT BY BREAKING HEARTS BUT BY WINNING THEM."

"IF WAR BREAKS OUT THE NATIONS TOGETHER MUST NOT HESITATE TO OPPOSE THE AGGRESSION."

"TURKEY IS OBLIGED TO FORBID THE PASSAGE OF THE STRAITS TO THE EVENTUAL DISTURBERS OF THE PEACE."

Ankara, 20 A.A.--- There follows a translation of an article by Miss Gladys Baker relative to her interview with Atatürk, the original text of which has fallen into our hands:

"Do you think that a war is probable in the near future?" Mustafa Kemal, the soldier-reformer, to whom the name of Ataturk has just recently been given, raised his loyal blue eyes from the table laid with the golden service of the white marble palace named Dolmabahtche, the former residence of the sultans before it became that of the President of the Turkish Republic, and gazed out of the high windows, with damask curtains, across the dim and quiet Bosphorus to the flickering lights of the Asiatic coast. With a grave and serious voice he said, "One must not speak of the near future, the danger of war is in the present."

THE SITUATION IN EUROPE.

When I asked him if the situation in Europe was more critical than it was several months ago he said, "It is worse, much worse. Certain insincere leaders who do not reflect on the seriousness of war have become the agents of aggression. They have deceived the nations which they have under their control by showing nationalism and tradition in a false light and by misusing it. In order to prevent chaos in these critical hours it is time that the masses decide for themselves and that they entrust the responsibilities of power to persons of conscience, of good character, and of high morality. That must be done without delay."

After which the realist, Ataturk, the military hero of Tchanakkale and of the Turkish war of Independence, who is not of the distant past, who never gave way before

fore any obstacle to achieve the strongest dictatorship in the world, said, "If war should break out suddenly, like a bomb, the nations all together, in order to prevent the war, must not hesitate to put their armed resistance and their financial power against the aggressor. The most rapid and effective means would be the foundation of an international organization capable of making the likely aggressor understand that he will gain nothing by aggression."

REGIONAL PACTS.

Ataturk is convinced that the final value of regional pacts rests in the conclusion of a general pact including all the nations. "However", he said, "the most urgent need at this time is that the neighboring countries discuss among themselves their needs and particular problems. Regional pacts have already given proof of their value in maintaining peace."

There is an extraordinary power of leadership in the powerful eyes of the Gazi. His strong eyebrows are never still. They raise to intellectual heights and they frown in such a way as to crease the deep lines in his forehead to an astonishing degree.

He is light skinned, tanned by the sun, and not brown. His hair is light auburn. The clear outline of his mouth as well as his chin show the firmness of his decisions. He is alert, quick at repartee, intelligent to a remarkable degree.

AMERICA AND WAR.

I asked if America would be able to preserve its policy of neutrality in the eventuality of war. "Impossible, impossible", he said, "if war breaks out the eminent position which the United States occupies in the society of nations must surely be affected. Whatever may be their geographic situations the nations are linked together by many ties." Ataturk compares the nations of the whole world to the inhabitants of an appartment house. The United States occupies the most luxurious appartment. If certain ones among the inhabitants set the house on fire it is impossible for the others to be unaffected by the fire. The same rule applies in case of war. It is impossible for the United States to stay out of it.

Ataturk added these words: "Such a large and powerful State as America, with interests throughout the world, cannot become a nation of second rank, politically and economically."

I asked the following question: "Do you think that the United States should have adhered to the Permanent Court of International Justice?" He replied, "By adhering to the Permanent Court of International Justice it is undeniable that the United States of America would have furthered the maintenance of world peace.

peace. It is not right that a nation whose influence and humanitarian ideals are so great should refuse to play an active part in the pacific settlement of international conflicts."

THE LEAGUE.

I asked, "Do you think then that the League of Nations is an effective means for the preservation of peace?" He replied: "The League of Nations has not yet proved that it is a definite and effective means. However, the League of Nations is today the only organization by means of which all the nations can cooperate with a view to the realization of a common goal."

The idealistic Ataturk who is recognized as the saviour of their country by 14 million Turks, continued, "I am also convinced that if permanent peace is desired international measures necessary for the amelioration of the masses must be taken. The welfare of humanity in general must take place of hunger and worry. The citizens of the entire world must be educated in such a fashion as to suppress jealousy, envy, and hatred." Ataturk accentuated these words with powerful gestures of his nervous hands.

BOLSHEVISM.

"Do you fear", I asked, "bolshevistic propaganda in Turkey?" This was his reply, "There will not be any bolshevism in Turkey. For the primary goal of the Turkish Government is to give the people liberty and happiness, and to care for the civilian population as well as our soldiers. There is no unemployment in Turkey. The people of our nation have opportunities for healthful rest in their moments of leisure."

I asked, "Why does Turkey wish to fortify the straits?"

"The world situation", he said, "and certain conditions have changed since, by the Treaty of Lausanne, Turkey agreed to leave the straits open. The straits divide Turkey into two parts. Therefore, the fortification of this maritime highway is very important for the security and defense of Turkey. It is also a vital factor in international relations. A position as important as this cannot be left to the mercy of reckless aggressors. Turkey is obliged to prevent the passage of the straits by eventual disturbers of the peace who have war as their goal." Shrugging his large shoulders under his neat dinner coat he added, "Turkey will never permit it."

I asked Kemal Ataturk why he did not like to be called a dictator. "I am not a dictator. They say that I am powerful. Actually that is true. There

is

is nothing which I cannot do if I so desire. Because I would not act through force and injustice. I believe that a dictator is one who subjects others to his will. I want to govern, not by breaking hearts, but by winning them."

He does not like the title of "Gazi", which means "the victorious". He prefers to be called Ataturk, a name which was given to him by the people and which means "Father of the Turks". In rest his face is tragic with his lips set. His eyes are like steel even when he is happy. I asked him if he were happy, he replied, "Yes, because I have succeeded."

REF:er

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 706 Istanbul, Turkey, July 9, 1935.

Subject: Detention of Greek Ships during the recent Insurrection, and the Turkish Government.

FOR DISTRIBUTION Yes No
To be held
In U. S. A.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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JAN 23 1953
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
AUG 5 - 1935
DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D.C.

Sir:

I have the honor to report the precise details in regard to incidents of unusual interest which arose during the recent insurrection in Greece, in the course of which the Turkish Government, at the request of the Hellenic Government, prevented five regularly documented Greek cargo steamers from proceeding to their several destinations. There was a good deal of comment at the time on this action by the Turkish authorities, and then discussion suddenly ceased. It may be useful to follow the course of events, as they establish a precedent to which we may have to refer at some future time.

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time. The practical facts concern the following ships:

SS/TILEMAHOS arriving from Soviet Russia; destination Savona, Italy, with a cargo of 6,000 tons of coal. Arrested at Buyukdere.

SS/KEHREA arriving from Soviet Russia; destination Piraeus with a cargo of 3,050 tons of coal. Arrested at Buyukdere.

SS/CONISTRA arriving from the Turkish port of Zongouldak; destination Piraeus with a cargo of 6,134 tons of coal. Arrested at Buyukdere.

SS/FOTINI CARA arriving from Soviet Russia; destination Oran, Algeria, with a cargo of 7,200 tons of coal. Arrested at Buyukdere.

SS/ATLAS arriving from Constanza, Rumania; destination Hamburg, with a cargo of 5,447 tons of gasoline and lamp oil. Arrested at a point four miles southwest of Chanakale in the Dardanelles.

It was generally understood at the time these ships were arrested that they were owned in whole or in part by the son of Mr. Venizelos, and that their cargoes, in reality, were destined to supply the insurgent forces. However that may be, the situation was brought to the attention of the Straits Commission at the Session of March 13th, under the Presidency of the Turkish Admiral, Ali Dalay. On this occasion the British delegate, Captain Macdonald, declared that he had prepared a memorandum in regard to the ships already named and detained "in order to prevent the delivery of their cargoes to the rebel naval forces in Greece, or from being seized by these forces." In the absence of the Greek delegate it was

decided

decided that Captain Macdonald's memorandum should not be discussed until the next meeting in order that the material facts might be ascertained. However, before adjourning, the Commission expressed the desire to be informed upon the following points:

1. What were the ports of departure and the destinations of the ships in question?

2. Where were they arrested?

3. Was their arrest based upon an order from the Turkish authorities or on a request from the Greek consular authorities?

4. What were their cargoes and to whom did they belong?

5. Is it true that the ship ATLAS was arrested four miles beyond the Straits?

6. Were protests filed? If yes, against whom? Against the Turkish authorities, or others?

The next session of the Commission was held on March 18, 1935, and on this occasion the British representative, Captain Macdonald, made the following statements:

"It is my personal view that the measures taken by the Turkish Government may be looked upon as wise, as their object was to contribute to the repression of a rebellion. From this humanitarian point of view we should be grateful to Turkey. On the other hand, it is quite possible that the insurance companies interested would have refused to pay any indemnity if the cargoes of the ships had been seized by the insurgent

naval

naval forces. In any case the incident calls for our attention. There exist, moreover, the precedents such as, for example, the American War of Secession during which Great Britain observed a most strict neutrality (sic). Therefore, I refer to my memorandum and propose that (1) this question be submitted to our legal sub-committee in order that it may deliberate upon the question of whether or not there is occasion to bring the facts to the attention of the League of Nations by direct communication; or (2) merely to mention them in our next annual report; or (3) to consider that the incident calls for no action."

The French representative said: "In order to define and limit the work of the sub-committee I feel that the Commission should issue explicit instructions. I hold furthermore that there is no reason for communicating on this subject directly with the League of Nations."

Admiral Ali Daday remarked that first of all it should be ascertained whether the measures taken respecting the Greek ships at the request of the Greek Legation were incompatible with the disposition of the Convention upon the Straits Regime.

It was finally decided that the legal sub-committee should be instructed to go into the question and at the same time the British delegate, Captain Macdonald, submitted the following memorandum:

"My attention has been directed by the local newspapers of March 8th and the following dates, to the fact that the Turkish authorities have required certain Greek ships which happened to be in the zone of the

Straits,

Straits, following their crossing from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, to stop at the port of Istanbul and remain there under surveillance. It appears that this measure was taken on the request of the Hellenic Government and for the purpose of preventing supplies from falling into the hands of the rebels.

"I am without precise information as to whether all these ships or some of them arrested their voyage voluntarily before the Turkish authorities had proceeded to the above mentioned course. If such was the case there can be no doubt that the Hellenic Government was perfectly in its right in prescribing to its representatives here to have recourse to means which would prevent these ships from leaving the port of Istanbul or any other Turkish port where they might be.

"If, however, these ships were in transit through the Straits and desired to continue on their respective ways, it seems to be very doubtful that the Turkish authorities had the right to accede to the desire of the Greek Government in stopping the vessels. The Straits Commission has always stood out to safeguard the rights assured by the Straits Convention to vessels in transit.

"Notably in 1929 the Commission intervened with success to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the case of Greek ships illegally detained by the Turkish sanitary authorities. I am of the opinion that this question merits being examined by the legal sub-committee and that the representative of Greece should give us such information on the subject as he possesses. It is my personal opinion that this does not constitute a

case

case for formulating a protest to the Turkish authorities, but that if in the course of our investigation it is established that the vessels in transit were prevented from going on their way, it would be proper for the Straits Commission to inform the League of Nations with a view to bringing out its point of view on the subject, the important item being that however justified might be the measures taken to assure tranquillity in the Aegean Sea, we must not lose from view the fact that possibly a very dangerous precedent has been created."

On March 27, 1935, at a meeting of the Straits Commission held that day, it was stated that the Greek representative had supplied various details (given on page one of this report) in regard to the Greek vessels arrested in the Straits, whereupon Captain Macdonald observed, with regard to the decision taken during the course of the preceding session that the incident of the detention of the Greek ships be submitted to the legal sub-committee, that he was not able to share the opinion then expressed of Admiral Dalay that there was no occasion for the sub-committee to examine the affair. Admiral Dalay replied that he had no objection to the examination of the question by the sub-committee and only desired that the sub-committee be informed of the opinion that he had expressed.

On May 13, 1935, at the next meeting of the Straits Commission, the Italian representative said: "Since we have here a question of principle - principle of the freedom of navigation in the Straits - I ask myself whether the Turkish Government was not obliged to inform

the

the Commission of measures taken in regard to the Greek ships at the request of the Hellenic Government." The Commission received at this meeting the report of the legal sub-committee and decided to adjourn discussion of the report and the remark of the Italian representative until the next meeting. The report of the legal sub-committee is as follows:

The legal sub-committee, invited by the Commission on March 18, 1935, to prepare a report upon the question of Greek commercial ships arrested in the Straits during that month has the honor to report as follows:

1. As to the first point in the instructions given to the sub-committee, the sub-committee is of the opinion that the information communicated is sufficient.

2. Touching the second point, it considers that the Commission has been sufficiently enlightened by the indications furnished by the representatives of Greece and Turkey.

3. As to the third point, the sub-committee considers that the Commission is fully qualified to seek to inform itself on the case in question since under the terms of Article 15 of the Convention of July 24, 1923, the ascertainment of all information concerning commerce and navigation in the Straits is within its competence. It considers, moreover, that the Committee, after having regularly examined it, has no occasion to deal further with the question raised. This decision is founded upon reasons exposed in the next succeeding paragraph.

4. The sub-committee is of the opinion that, in limiting itself to police activities at the request of

a foreign State with respect to ships flying the flag of the said State, the Turkish Government and equally the Greek Government did not exceed their rights nor infringe upon the dispositions of the Straits Convention.

The report of the sub-committee came before the full Commission at the meeting held on June 7, 1935. At this meeting Admiral Dalay said that he would be much obliged if the Italian representative would abandon the discussion of the question raised at the meeting of May 13th, on which occasion he had said that a question of principle was involved in the Greek incident, resulting from which he asked if the Turkish Government was not obliged to inform the Commission of the measures it had taken. The Italian representative replied to Admiral Dalay stating that in his view the Turkish Government had not gone beyond the dispositions of the Straits Convention in taking certain police measures. Finally, Captain Macdonald, the British representative, by now taking only tepid interest in the proceedings, remarked: "In the first memorandum which I presented to the Commission on the subject of the Greek ships arrested in the Straits, I invoked the case of Greek ships detained in 1929 at Buyukdere with respect to which we addressed ourselves directly to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I was of the opinion that we might take up equally the present incident without proceeding to any other démarche whatever. The legal sub-committee that we have consulted on the subject concludes, on its side, that neither the Turkish nor the Hellenic Government has exercised more than its right

and

and that without infringing upon the dispositions of the Convention, and therefore there is no need to take any action. At this point the President put to a vote the conclusions of the report of the legal sub-committee which was unanimously adopted.

Just what the considerations were which finally induced all the delegates to agree that there were no objections to the arrest of regularly documented ships passing through the Straits I do not know, but, arising out of this fairly long and tedious report, is the certain fact that in case of domestic difficulties in a given country, vessels flying the flag of that country and desiring to proceed to a given destination for which they are regularly documented, may be arrested on a request from that country, as far as the Straits Commission is concerned therein.

It has been hinted to me that this question was first raised in the Commission on the personal initiative of the British delegate and that his Ambassador may have advised him to drop it — which he certainly did.

Respectfully yours,

Robert P. Skinner.

RPS:lr
710/711

ADDRESS REPLY TO
THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
AND REFER TO INITIALS
AND No.
(SC)EF70

NAVY DEPARTMENT
WASHINGTON

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AUG 20 1935
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Note
711.672 Straits

DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS
AND RECORDS

Sir:

Acknowledgment is made of State Department letter of 26 July, file NE 767.68119/878, together with its inclosure, copy of a dispatch dated 3 July from the Embassy at Istanbul. The State Department letter requests any comments or observations which the Navy Department may care to make on the question of freedom of navigation of the Dardanelles Straits by American commercial vessels and aircraft and war vessels and aircraft.

Careful consideration has been given this question by the Navy Department. This has included a study of the present position by the General Board, whose reports on the same subject in 1931 were transmitted to the State Department as representing the views of the Navy Department at that time.

It is understood that the present situation differs from that considered in 1931 only in the suggested possibility that Turkey may determine upon a changed attitude toward the Straits Convention signed at Lausanne on 24 July 1934, may resume military occupation of the demilitarized zones provided for by the Convention, and may re-arm the Straits for their defense.

In the opinion of the Navy Department the freedom of navigation of the Straits by American vessels and aircraft can be safeguarded satisfactorily by separate formal agreement with Turkey, whether the Straits remain in a demilitarized status or under armed control by Turkey. This department therefore wishes to re-affirm its views as communicated to the State Department by its letter of 13 July 1931. These views may be summarized by the following extracts from the reports of the General Board which accompanied the letter referred to:

711.672 Straits/6

(a) "that in any future treaty between Turkey and the United States, a provision similar to Article I of the Straits Convention or Article X of the Lausanne Treaty (between the United States and Turkey) without any reference to the Straits Convention and providing for 'most favored nation' treatment, would be satisfactory".

(b) "that provision be made by some formal agreement, treaty or exchange of notes, for the right of vessels and aircraft, public and private, of the United States of America to navigate the Straits of the Dardanelles, the Sea of Marmora, and the Bosphorus on a basis of equality with similar vessels and aircraft of the most favored foreign nation; that the United States should

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not by any act or undertaking assist to perpetuate the Straits Commission; that if such a Commission is continued the United States should not have a representative on this Commission; and, that we should insist upon our right to deal directly with the Turkish government regarding the rules for navigation of the Straits".

Respectfully,

H. L. Roosevelt

The Honorable,

The Secretary of State.

H. L. ROOSEVELT
Acting Secretary of the Navy

Confidential

September 11 1935

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No. 219

G. Howland Shaw, Esquire,

American Chargé d'Affaires ad interim,

Istanbul.

Sir:

Reference is made to the Embassy's despatch No. 695 of July 3, 1935 regarding Turkey's attitude towards the Straits Convention.

A copy of this despatch was transmitted to the Navy Department with the suggestion that any observation which that Department might care to make on the question would be welcomed.

882

This Department is now in receipt of a communication dated August 17, 1935, from the Navy Department setting forth its views on the subject. A copy of this communication is enclosed.

It will be noted that in its reply the Navy Department reaffirms its opinion that the freedom of navigation of the Straits by American vessels and aircraft can be safeguarded most satisfactorily by a separate formal agreement with Turkey. However, it would appear from the Embassy's recent reports on the subject that the Turkish Government would be unwilling to conclude such an agreement unless the United States consented to assume certain responsibilities for the defense of the Straits, a condition which is obviously unacceptable.

Under these circumstances, and also in view of the fact that the situation with reference to the Straits is susceptible of sudden change in the event that the Turks carry

out

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out their avowed intention of doing away with the demilitarized zones, the Department feels that this matter might be left in abeyance until such time as a more favorable opportunity for negotiation presents itself.

It would be helpful if the Embassy would continue to follow closely developments in this matter, in which connection the Department would welcome any suggestions which the Embassy may be in a position to make at any time.

An acknowledgment of this instruction is requested.

Very truly yours,

For the Secretary of State:

R. Walton Moore

Enclosure:
From Navy Department,
August 17, 1935.

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SEP 10 1935

A true copy of the signed original.

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

767.68119/883

SEE 768.00/24 FOR #768

FROM Greece (Aldridge) DATED Aug.2, 1935
TO NAME

1—1127

REGARDING:

Fortification of the Dardanelles.

Articles in Greek and Turkish press concerning question of -.

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

767.68119/884

SEE 867.75/37 FOR #719

FROM Turkey (Skinner) DATED July 18, 1935

TO NAME

1—1127

REGARDING: Revision of the Straits Convention.

Conversation with French and British Ambassadors concerning attitude of their Governments with respect to -.

Wi

No. 719 Istanbul, Turkey, July 16, 1935.

Subject: The Defense of the Straits, Anglo-German Naval Agreement, and the War in Ethiopia.

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867.75/37

CONFIDENTIAL

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D.C.

Sir:

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The British and French Ambassadors called yesterday, primarily to discuss with me the rather high-handed proposals of the Turkish Government with respect to the purchase of the Constantinople Telephone Company's property in which the predominant ownership is British, but in which there is French and American capital as well. It was agreed that if the representative of the company now at Ankara could come to an arrangement with the Government for the purchase of the system, at a fair price, it would be better that

no

no diplomatic intervention whatever should take place, and there appears to be a fair prospect that such will be the result of the conversations now in progress.

I profited by the presence of the two Ambassadors to obtain their present views on the Straits question. It seems to be certain that neither the British nor the French Government has received any definite proposal from the Turkish Government, although there has been much informal talk, and although the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs has made known to both in general terms the desires of Turkey, as previously reported by me. My British colleague seemed to be nebulous as to the eventual attitude of his own Government which prefers, no doubt, the existing state of affairs, but does not see what can be done if the Turks proceed to arm the Straits. My French colleague seemed to have made up his mind that Turkey would do as she pleased, in any event; that disregard for treaty engagements in Europe had proceeded so far that texts were no longer of much value. As far as I could make out, he was almost indifferent, from which I conclude that whenever Turkey decides to formulate a definite request, it will not be too difficult for her to have her way.

Both Ambassadors were in a pessimestic frame of mind. Mr. Kammerer was of the opinion that the recent agreement between Great Britain and Germany as to naval strength was a shattering blow to the already fragile Versailles Treaty. Sir Percy Loraine was of the opinion that whatever France thought about the naval agreement today, she would ultimately rejoice because it fixed

definite

definite limits to German naval expansion, and constituted the only positive arrangement in regard to armament thus far come to between the Powers. Mr. Kammerer hoped he was right, but was sure he was wrong because the limits fixed upon German naval expansion might force France to build more extensively than she planned, and anyway the Germans could not be relied upon to stick to their bargain — they would ostensibly build to the limits fixed in the agreement with Great Britain and would privately do something else with which they would surprise the world at some unknown date, and the only real security for Europe was by means of complete and confidential solidarity between Great Britain, France, and Italy. My colleagues were both of a mind that the immediate danger was the outbreak of war in Ethiopia; that Italy was without a respectable pretext of any kind and was already so deeply involved that she could not withdraw; and that neither Great Britain nor France would take any measures to prevent the war, other than by persuasion.

Mr. Kammerer surprised me by the bitterness with which he spoke of the prospects of the League of Nations. In common decency the League of Nations ought to take up the controversy between Italy and Ethiopia, and if this were done Italy would quite surely leave the League. But if the League was so feeble that it dare not deal with a situation of just the character for which it had been created to deal, what was the use of a League? He ardently hoped that the League of Nations would continue to exist, there was need for it, but he was beginning

ning to think that the time was not far distant when the complete break-up of the League would have to be considered and when Europe would revert to old-fashioned diplomacy.

On the whole, an interesting conversation with two intelligent Ambassadors, but depressing enough for one who would like to see existing controversies receive just and logical settlement, and some assurances for permanent peace. Naturally my colleagues had the usual observations to make about the United States — if only we would come in, bear our part of the burden, etc., which I parried by remarking that at one time we had borne our part of the burden without being very much thanked for it. I was tempted to say, but did not, that if treaties were breaking down here and there, perhaps the first and important practical examples of how not to observe treaty engagements were given by Great Britain and France when without discussion and without proposals of any kind, they simply refrained from dealing with their obligations to the United States under the Debt Agreements.

Respectfully yours,

Robert F. Skinner.

RFS:lr

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PBG/IS
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AMERICAN CONSULAR SERVICE

Geneva, Switzerland, August 26, 1935

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
RECEIVED
SEP 16 1935
DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS

Wallace Murray, Esquire,
Chief, Division of Near Eastern Affairs,
Department of State,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Wallace:

I have your letter of July 29 in which you kindly tell me that the account in the "Mail Bag" of a purported conversation here between the Ethiopian delegate and myself was given no credence in the Department. While I did not believe that it would be given credence, I nevertheless appreciate your sending me word of this to keep the record straight.

I also have your letter of August 8 concerning Miss Woodsmall. Miss Woodsmall has not yet reached Geneva, at least she has not been in to see me nor have I encountered her here. You may be sure that I shall do everything possible for her while she is here and I appreciate your giving me the introduction.

You did not say in any of your letters whether you had received the letter I sent you regarding Geneva action on the régime of the Straits. You will recall that you asked me for an interpretation of what was done here. It is not that I expected an acknowledgment, but I merely wished to tell you that I sent in the best information I could get on this subject.

I now have quite a different matter to speak of. The other day Mr. Fotitch, who has long been permanent delegate of Yugoslavia in Geneva, called on

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me and told me that he had been appointed Yugoslav Minister at Washington. It appeared that at that time we had not given our agrément so he was saying nothing about it and asked me not to mention it. I have known Fotitch in a fairly intimate way for a long time. When I was in Belgrade a few years ago I saw him and he was most courteous to both Charlotte and myself, entertaining us in a most interesting way. At that time he was Under Secretary in the Foreign Office at Belgrade and seemed to be quite a power there. Of course our Legation at Belgrade would know much more about that than I do here. He is, in my view, a hard-boiled Balkan politician with all that that implies. He is exceedingly keen and intelligent, naturally knows Balkan politics very well indeed, and has been concerned with Yugoslavia's relations with the League almost from the beginning. He can thus explain League procedures to you, should you have occasion to want to get certain specific procedures clear in your mind. Although he is in every sense, as I have said, a Balkan politician, I have found him absolutely reliable in my relations with him and he has been extremely helpful to me. Perhaps he feels that telling the truth to his colleagues is the best policy. In any event, I have never known him to mislead me and his forecasts, which he was able to obtain through his many contacts, on League action have been most astute. I am personally quite inclined to like Fotitch and his wife is very agreeable. I told him that I would write to you about him. He naturally is not expecting me to size up his character in quite this manner; but of course I am telling you everything I know about him.

If Fotitch be given a few harmless confidences, I think that you will find him most useful in return.

We expect to be catching the ball here on this Italo-Abyssinian matter very soon now. While there

is a very great deal of speculation as to how the matter will eventuate in the League, in my opinion none of this speculation which I have encountered has a sufficiently sound basis to even suggest its value as a forecast. At least, I have not felt it worth while to send anything on that score to the Department.

I very much appreciate what you had to say in your letter of August 9 regarding my telegrams. I do not need to tell you that, particularly in Geneva, what goes on on the surface is a very small part of the story. I did my best to learn what was taking place underneath. Geneva is a very peculiar post in respect of obtaining information of that sort, the technique being quite different from that in a capital of a country. I appreciate that I sent in some rather curious developments. They were not much more curious than my method of finding out about these things. I nevertheless withheld everything from the Department which I did not feel was sufficiently reliable to send in and in view of the sources of this information I also tried to indicate in each instance the degree of its reliability. I expect to again use my channels of information as well as I can at the next meeting of the Council. Both Paris and Rome have been exceedingly helpful to me in sending me of late copies of their telegrams to the Department. I of course sent a large number of mine to both of these posts when the matter was being handled in Geneva. I also sent a few to London.

There are certain rumors floating about concerning our special relationship, for example with the British, in this matter. Regarding this point, my estimate of the situation is that our relations with the British or with the other Great Powers principally interested is solely on the basis of information. Indications of certain relationships, presumably of this character, have appeared between the lines of the telegrams sent to the Department by some of our

Missions, of which I received copies. At the same time, it would be most helpful to me in the contacts with the delegations of the Powers when they come here, could I know something of the Department's general attitude at that moment and also of its more specific policy vis-à-vis any of the Great Powers concerned. As a case in point, I have just received the Department's 332 of August 18, 1 p.m. to Paris. 765.84/851 C.F. I am thinking, however, if the Department does not send me any last-minute instructions for my guidance before the Council meets on September 4, of telegraphing the Department asking that I be given background information. I am sure that you appreciate that for the officials of these governments to be aware that I have a knowledge of our own position assists me very much indeed in having relationships with them. Naturally, the Department would have to rely on my discretion in this matter, but I hope that it feels that it is able to do so. I have not yet entirely made up my mind whether I shall telegraph the Department in this sense or not. I am, however, telling you of this as background for any telegram which I may decide to send. I do not think that I can emphasize how much more useful I could be here in obtaining information from important officials, if they can feel at the same time that I have the confidence of Washington.

I can imagine you as tremendously busy at this time and I feel that I ought to apologize for so long a letter. With best wishes for your hard job,

As ever yours,

Prentiss Gilbert

September 16 1935

9/14-12:16

My dear Prentiss:

I want to thank you for your letter of August 26, 1935. First of all let me apologize for our failure to acknowledge your letter of June 5, 1935 regarding the Straits. The information which you furnished was most helpful and we are very glad to have it in our consideration of the general problem.

We have now been notified of the proposal of the Yugoslav Government to appoint Mr. Fotitch as Minister in Washington and you may be assured that when he arrives here I shall endeavor to give him a hearty welcome.

As you may well imagine we are now up to our necks in the Italo-Ethiopian matter as you must be yourself. In view of the rapidity with which matters are developing I do not see how it is possible for us to send you the background material which you suggest but I am passing your letter along for comment on this point by other interested offices in the Department.

With best wishes,

Yours as ever,

Wallace Murray

Prentiss B. Gilbert, Esquire,
American Consul,
Geneva.

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EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 802 Istanbul, Turkey, October 10, 1935.

Subject: The Straits Convention.

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NOV 16 - 1935
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
NOV 1 - 1935
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D.C.

Sir:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the Department's confidential instruction No. 219, dated September 11, 1935, as directed. The instruction is receiving my attention and it is probable that in the course of the coming weeks I shall be able to make some suggestions. At the moment it is not possible to discuss topics of this kind with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, either formally or informally, as he is at Geneva.

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Respectfully yours,

Robert P. Skinner.

Robert P. Skinner.

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EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 804 Istanbul, Turkey, October 12, 1935.

Subject: Turkey and the Dardanelles.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
NOV 1 - 1935
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

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The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington, D.C.

Sir:

Some days ago Mr. Berc Türker, an Armenian member of the Grand National Assembly, put down a question in regard to the Straits Convention; possibly, it may be uncharitably added, with a view to coming before the public conspicuously, and an answer was made publicly yesterday by Bay Şükrü Kaya, Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs. The reply would have been more interesting had Dr. Aras been available to formulate it. What Bay Şükrü Kaya actually said follows:

"The present status of the Dardanelles is determined by the Straits Convention. It is not an unknown fact that this situation places restrictions

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strictions on the defense of the country in general and that of the Dardanelles in particular. You are also aware of the fact that the international situation is disturbed. In such a time it can easily be understood why all our attention and care should be concentrated on that part of the country where the conditions of defense are either insufficient or weak."

"We are not neglecting, nor shall we neglect in the future, to explain in international meetings the necessity of completing the defense of our country. Should we be confronted by unexpected developments we shall not hesitate to take the necessary measures."

After thanking the government for the above reply, deputy Berc Türker stated that it would be unwise to leave this door of the country open at a time when the international situation had experienced great changes and all nations were arming. He stated furthermore:

"Judging from a point of view of justice and equity and from that of the security of our sacred country, and finally from a standpoint of the radical changes which international situations and conditions have undergone, the provisions of the Treaty relative to the Straits are no longer effective. We expect the government to liquidate this matter without delay."

These words of deputy Berc Türker were greeted by loud applause. Thereupon Bay Şükrü Kaya spoke again and expressed the hope that his reply was of a reassuring nature.

If nothing definite appears in the foregoing, it is at all events evident that Turkey is not losing sight of the Straits Convention.

Respectfully yours,

Robert P. Skinner.

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EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Ankara, Turkey, November 1, 1935.

No. 817

Subject: Regime of the Straits.

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DEC 5 - 1935
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The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D.C.

Sir:

In the course of a long visit which I paid upon Dr. Tevfik Aras, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, today, the subject of the Straits Convention came up. Dr. Aras mentioned that the regime of the Straits was still much in the Turkish mind, that the Turkish position was now well known, and that official discussions might become active at no distant date. Nevertheless, it did seem to me that he was less disposed to pursue conversations with the European powers at present than he had been when I last talked with him on this subject. No doubt, with so many urgent problems pressing for solution and when the guaranty of protection for the

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Straits from the signatory Powers of the treaty is not without practical value, he is not so unwilling to allow the existing regime to remain undisturbed, at least for the present. He mentioned himself that the United States was not a party to the existing treaty and when I slipped in a question about what might be his attitude if sometime we should feel an inclination to propose an individual treaty, he indicated that we would not be likely to have special difficulties if our desires, when formulated, were limited to free transit for our vessels in time of peace and war, on the same terms as those granted to other nations.

My suggestion to the Department is that nothing be attempted for the present, but that the subject be kept in mind, to be dealt with practically when it becomes evident that the Straits Convention is to be modified.

Respectfully yours,

Robert P. Skinner.

Robert P. Skinner.

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Central File: Decimal File 767.68119, Political Relations Of States, Relations; Bi-Lateral Treaties., Political., War. Peace. Friendship. Alliance. Non-Aggression., Turkey And Greece, Termination Of War. Mediation. Armistice., Jan. 2, 1930 - July 23, 1936. January 2, 1930 - July 23, 1936. MS Turkey, Greece, and the Balkan States: Records of the U.S. Department of State, 1930-1944: Records of the Department of State Relating to Political Relations of Turkey, Greece, and the Balkan States, 1930-1939. National Archives (United States). Archives Unbound, link.gale.com%2Fapps%2Fdoc%2FSC5111385556%2FGDSC%3Fu%3Domni%26sid%3Dbookmark-GDSC. Accessed 20 June 2025.